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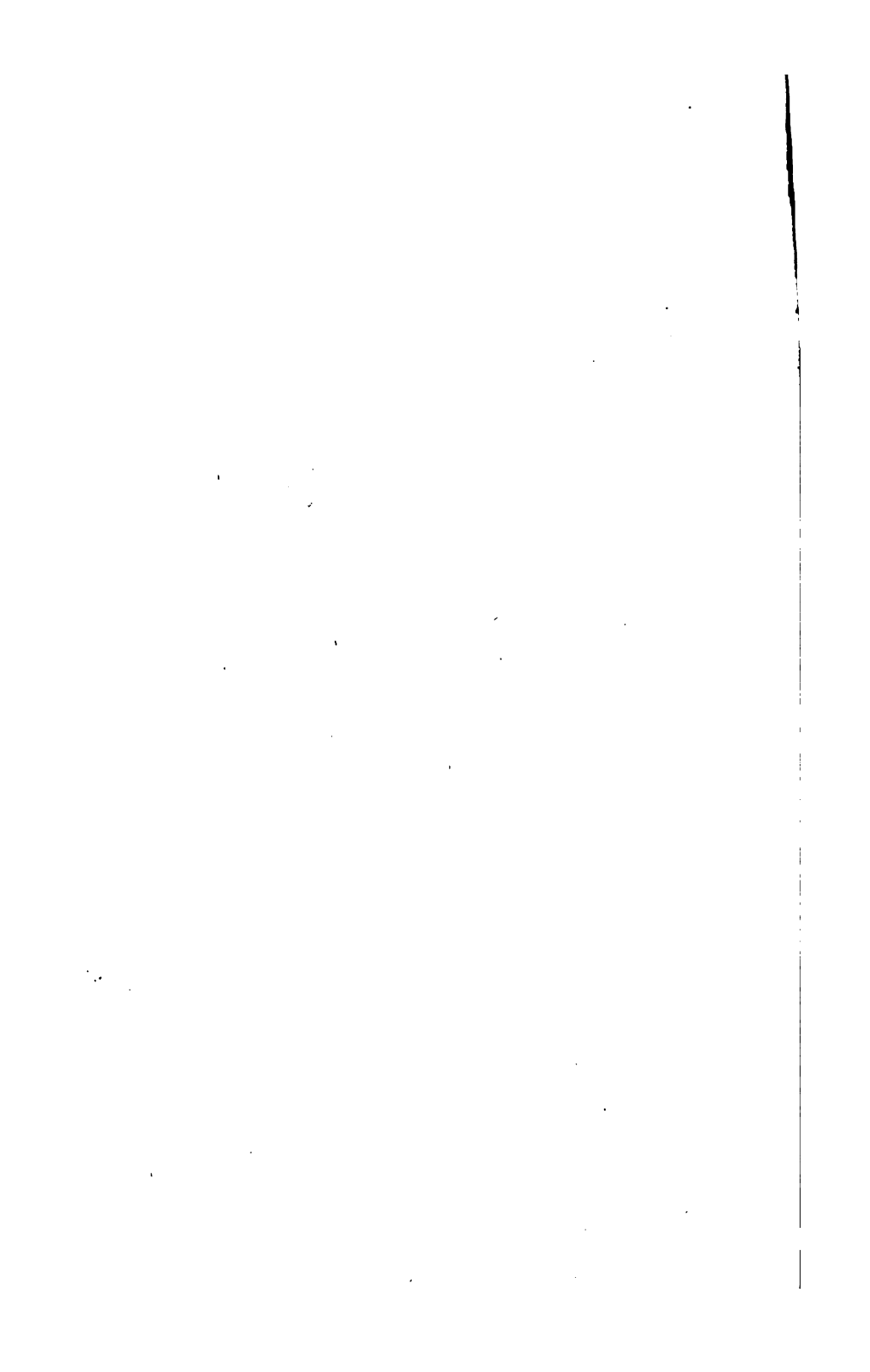


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BOD Old Class

Tuesday, 13 June 2006

OC13245



THE  
HOUSE OF ELMORE.

A FAMILY HISTORY.

"When will the ancient curse be still'd, that weighs  
Upon our house! Some mocking demon sports  
With every new-formed hope, nor envious leaves  
One hour of joy. So near the haven smiled—  
So smooth the treacherous main—secure I deem'd  
My happiness; the storm was lulled; and bright  
In evening's lustre gleamed the sunny shore:  
Then through the placid air the tempest sweeps,  
And bears me to the roaring surge again!"

SCHILLER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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TO  
CONRAD HUME PINCHES, ESQ.,  
OF CLARENDON HOUSE, KENNINGTON.  
THIS STORY  
IS  
DEDICATED,  
IN REMEMBRANCE OF OLD TIMES,  
BY  
THE AUTHOR.





# THE HOUSE OF ELMORE.

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## INTRODUCTION.

REMINISCENCES of the past seldom bring bitterness to our wandering memories. With most men there is allied with such-like recollections, a sad, sweet, holy calmness, that teaches the lessons of content and love; that hallows forms over which the dark curtain has long since dropped; that passes over bygone griefs, misfortunes, and regrets so lightly, that they become fair mental resting-places; that reconciles us to the great home-losses, the household gaps for ever blank and void, pointing at the same time to the doctrine of resignation from the pages of the Book. Such men I can envy.

My father was a rich man and a proud one. At the time of which I write, he had scarcely reached his nine and thirtieth year, and his wife, and my mother, was twelve years his junior. He had led her to the altar a bride of sixteen summers, and time had not blunted the first romance of his attachment, nor made him less of a worshipper.

The remembrance of the home in which he lived (a mansion overlooking the west-end parks), would not be so strongly engraven on my mind, were it not for the shame that fell upon the name of Elmore there. The ban and interdict laid upon recurrence to that home, served but the more indelibly to fix its lasting impression on me; strengthened as it was by the great blot on my father's honour—the lasting change in my father's life.

From the time that my parents set forth upon their marriage pilgrimage, they lived for society and pleasure, and the present was the sole study—the single idol at which the knee was bent. There was no future in their anticipations; the world was before them, and they could enjoy it with their riches—there

was little bound to them, for my father was ranked as one of the wealthiest commoners in England.

There were four children to bless my father's marriage. Gilbert, the eldest born, a tall, pale boy, of ten years old, with thoughtful dark eyes and long black hair; myself, two years his junior; Edward, a blue-eyed, golden-ringletted child, of some six years; and my sister Agnes, twin sister of my younger brother, and the flower of the flock.

We saw but little of our parents; strict devotees to fashion, and ever with the glittering crowd, they left us to our nurses and our governess, and, assured of our comfort, looked for content beyond the hearth. A few light words, some stray kisses and endearments now and then, sufficed to assure us that we had father and mother living, and that was all.

But the dawning of a great change came upon this unprofitable existence, and dimmed the brilliant vista on which my father's gaze was ever fixed.

By and bye, my father came more often to our rooms, and sat longer with us, and took

greater interest in our studies and occupations. Sometimes he would gather us round his knees, and teach us from the great storehouse of his own learning, and linger with us till the servants came to summon him. But he was changed. There was not that free, careless look upon his handsome face—the colour had faded somewhat from it, and was, even to our childish observation, lined with anxiety, and often haggard.

Amongst the frequent guests at our house, one was particularly remarkable—a Sir William Ashford—a fine-looking man of about thirty years of age. My father had had only one friend, to whom he was particularly attached, and he had lately gone abroad; therefore, Sir William Ashford came more prominently into view, and the house seemed never free from him.

With all but my father he was a great favourite. He brought me and my brothers costly books and expensive toys, and Agnes articles of more delicate workmanship; and took an interest in us, and paid us considerably more attention than is due from the man to the child.

In those quiet evenings, of which we had so few, we looked forward to the arrival of Sir William with some anxiety, and watched from the windows for his coming carriage.

To my mother—my beautiful and graceful mother—he was the soul of chivalrous gallantry; and it was this rapt devotion that, beginning by slow degrees, and gaining ground, had attracted the notice of my father.

There was nothing to cause a decided suspicion, or to afford a pretext to break off his acquaintance, and yet there was a marked attention which did not seem to displease my mother, and which began to prey upon her husband.

Then there was a quarrel—the first quarrel—between our parents; and I stole down, with my brother Gilbert, to the door of the room, and stood tremblingly there, listening to the deep voice of my father, and the softly reproachful answers from my mother, and afraid to enter. The storm passed over, and they were friends again; and my father came less to our rooms for a few weeks, and Sir William Ashford was more attentive than ever

to my mother, and more kind to her children. Then, there were more quarrels, and more reconciliations, and still *he* came, and still my mother received him graciously, as if in gentle defiance to my father's wish.

There came a December night, when there were more guests, more music, feasting, dancing in the house, than I had ever known. It was after one of those reconciliations before alluded to, and also the anniversary of my parents' wedding-day. Upon such occasions as these—and on these alone—my father had a peculiar wish to see his children mingling with the guests. At no other time were we suffered to know anything of the great people that came to the house to join in fête and ball, save what we could learn by ourselves from the servants, or by stolen observations taken at half-open doors. But each anniversary of the day he married pretty Agnes Witherby, he set aside all rules of fashion, and courted and treated his boys and girl as principal guests. "Surely, they have a right to participate in the festivities of the occasion," he would say with a laugh, "and my heart cannot deny the

little rogues." We counted the days and weeks that intervened between his first promise and the realization of the event, which, in itself, was indeed a golden night.

On this particular evening it was a grander night than usual; there were more guests—an ambassador or two—a sprinkling of members of Parliament and their wives, and more than one peer of the realm. Sir William Ashford had been invited, but had not accepted the invitation, neither had he responded to it; but there was my Aunt Witherby, a sister of my mother, and a very important personage indeed.

I can remember the sensation which my doll of a sister Agnes created, as, perfectly self-possessed, she paraded the rooms like a queen of the fairies, at the least.

There were many covert smiles at pretty Aggy exchanged between the guests, and my aunt rounded her eyes in mute astonishment, when she clambered to the vacant seat by her side, and puzzled the woman of the world (a woman not easily puzzled either) with her questions and replies. They were not childish



questions, neither were they suggested by a premature oldness of thought; they were satirical, and critical, and bold, and my aunt shuddered once or twice, and sniffed at her bouquet, to hide her embarrassment.

I sketch this scene and these characters in mere outline—parts are to me, of course, faint and indistinct; but many of these guests—figures passing dimly behind the screen—may come into the daylight with the future record of my life.

The fête was in its full glory, when my mother was observed to leave her partner abruptly, and sink upon a chair, faint and exhausted. Ere my father could reach her side she was in a swoon.

The dance was abruptly broken off, and the guests crowded round her, and came flying towards the point of interest with glasses of water, wine, and smelling salts. She soon recovered, but complaining still of faintness, was led by my father from the room, he tenderly solicitous of every step.

"Continue the dancing," she murmured;  
"I will return presently; this oppressive feel-

ing will soon be gone. It is the heat, I think."

In less than a quarter of an hour my father returned, with the tidings that she was better, but too faint to make her re-appearance so quickly after her nervous attack.

Agnes glided from the ball-room, and came back again, and sat beside me on a couch.

"I have been to see mamma."

"I hope she is better, Aggy?"

"Oh! much better; but her head aches so, she tells me. I wonder why she kissed me to-night, when I went up to her room, and why she cried so bitterly?"

"Did she *cry*, Agnes?"

"Yes, Luke."

"That's strange."

"Well—perhaps it is—but let us sit here and watch the dancers. I wish we could dance, Luke. Mamma says we are too young to learn, but shall when we are old enough. I am sure I am quite old enough to dance—don't you think so, Luke?"

But I was thinking of my mother.

My father went out again and came back

apologising for Mrs. Elmore, who was still suffering from a violent headache, which he regretted to say would incapacitate her from rejoining the party. My father did not quit his guests for some hours, and strove to make amends for the absence of the hostess by the polite attention of the host.

It was nearly one o'clock, when, watching his opportunity, he stole away to see after the health of his dear Agnes, and left the company waltzing gaily round.

The hour was late, and the carriages were locked in masses without, and the torches of linkboys were flaring to and fro in the dark night.

"This is my favourite waltz," said Agnes, to Gilbert and Edward, who came toward us arm-in-arm, "now sit still and listen. This is the 'Honeymoon Waltz,' Gilbert."

The waltz proceeded, the dance seemed to grow more furious rather than to flag, the music crashed from the further end of the room, the waltzers spun rapidly past, when the door opened, and my father stood on the threshold.

He was not remarked at first save by ourselves—and we looked from one to the other inquiringly, and held our breath in mute suspense and horror. There he stood, so ghastly white—with eyes so fixed and vacant, and mouth unnaturally distorted, making no effort to approach further into the room. A young officer and his partner were first caught by his wild appearance, and stopped suddenly—another pair, attracted by the intensity of their gaze, halted abruptly also—then another and another—then a scream from more than one lady—then the whole mass of dancers still and terrified. The band ceased playing, and all eyes were turned towards the door.

“What is the matter, Elmore?” cried a dozen friendly voices.

“Matter?” he answered vaguely.

“What is it—what is it?” enquired others, and more than one shrieked out, “Don’t go near him!”

My father walked slowly into the room, the guests shrinking back and making way.

“Pray continue the dance; I disturb you!” he said, hurriedly; “nothing has happened;

I am well—very well. Where is Sir William? Let us have some more lights! Nothing has happened—nothing has happened,” he repeated, looking wildly round; “continue the dance, for God’s sake! Don’t mind me, I am well—only my head—my head keeps swelling so. Mrs. Witherby—will you favour me with your hand for the next dance?—nothing has hap—”

He stopped, and, pressing his hands to his temples, gave vent to such a prolonged yell of madness, that on each face came the pallor of the dead. Another instant, and he was surrounded by his friends, and born shrieking from the room, and all was tumult and confusion in the house.

He was carried to his bed a maniac, and we four children were left in the deserted ball-room, strewn with music-leaves, stray gloves and ribbons, motherless and disgraced.

\* \* \* \*

If the fabled wonders of the Eastern Magi were not all creations of a subtle brain, and we could look into their magic crystals and witness—standing within enchanted circles,

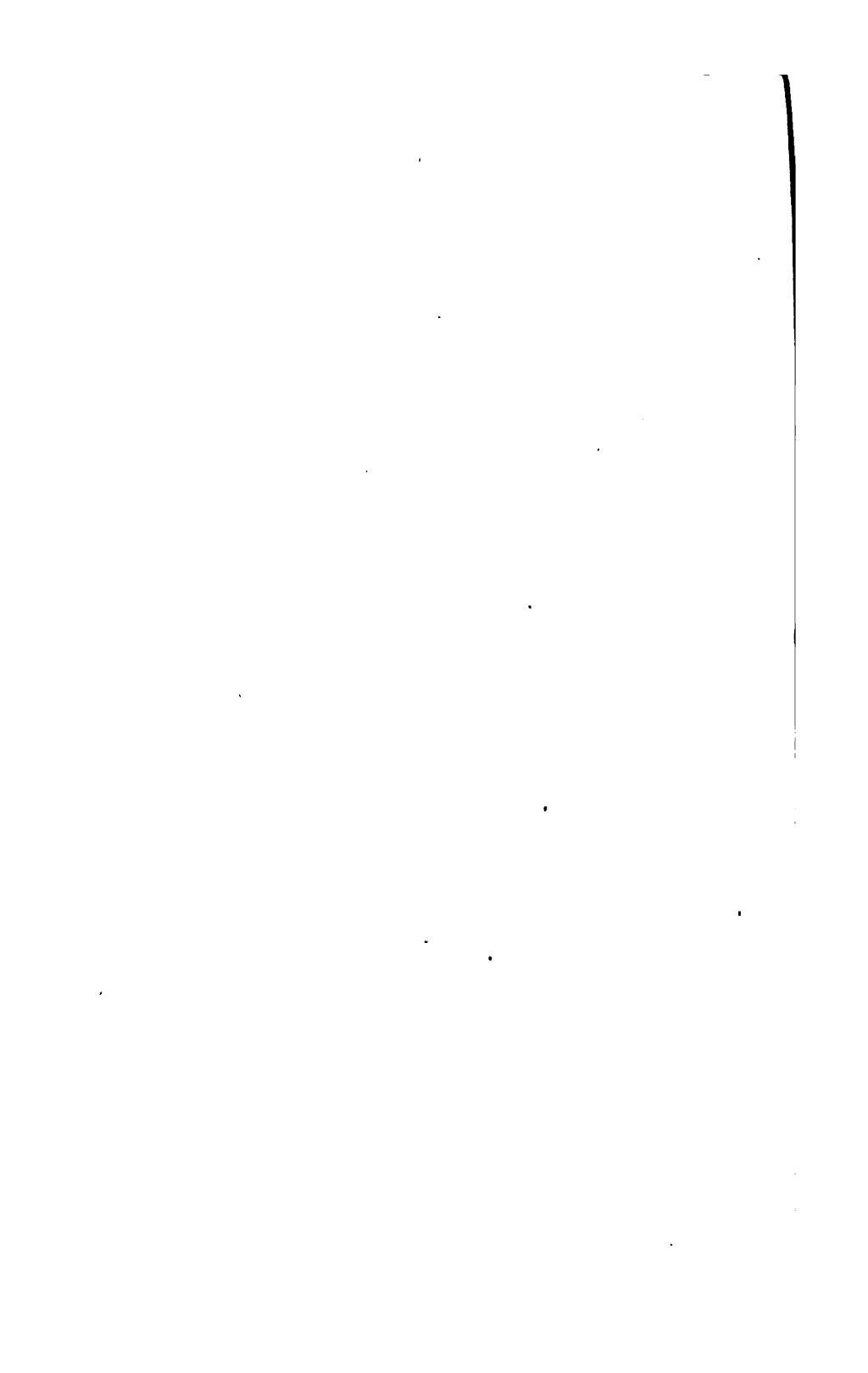
or girded by belts, the power of which is illimitable and potent—the lives we might have followed, the pursuits we might have led, the faces that might have been bent over us;—gazing at the ambition of a life hanging by a single hair, waiting a word, a glance, a movement of our own; looking at the future as it might have been mapped out to us, and which we, groping onwards with the blind, pass by in search of darkness; watching the quicksands in our path, and following no meteors that lead to ignorance and follies; preparing for the sorrows that are to come, the friends we are to shake hands with and pass by on the road; meeting the enemies that are to thwart those projects on which we build our hopes and prayed for their fulfilment;—if we could do this, we might learn many a lesson of content, for what is marked out for us *must* be good.

Still, with the knowledge of what my life has been, and what incidents, shifting as the coloured glasses of the schoolboy's toy, have mingled with it, and with the careers of those I loved, the thought is ever with me what would have been my progress—what

friends should I have had, destinies to meet, difficulties to encounter, and hopes to strive for—had I lived on as my childhood began—had my guilty mother never left the blight upon the hearth, or my father never fled that society which once he lived for and made his study of, but with his riches braved the world in that home where his fond heart was wrecked?

## BOOK I.





## CHAPTER I.

## A MAN OF IMPULSE.

THERE is a pleasant sea-side town called Wharnby, on the English coast. One mile from Wharnby—which was in itself, at the time I write, but a nest of houses buried between white, giant-like cliffs, that flanked it right and left—stood my father's house, a dark red-brick mansion embosomed within a thick plantation leading to the very verge of the cliff. There was not a habitation between it and Wharnby—it stood alone, exposed to the howling winds that came rushing and roaring from the sea on tempestuous nights, making every window rattle in its casement. There were extensive garden grounds, a miniature lake,

a large park well stocked with deer, shrubberies, preserves,—everything indicative of the taste of an English gentleman ; and yet standing perched on the summit of the white crag, with the black trees nodding over its roof, it presented a gloomy, desolate appearance. There were some lovely views from the top windows of the house ;—looking inland there was to be seen a fine undulating country, of wood and dale, and broad field golden with corn, green with meadow pasture, purple with the clover, which stretched for miles on either side, and was intersected here and there by a winding chalky road. Looking seaward there was one vast expanse of green waves, over which occasionally glided a solitary fishing-smack or row-boat. The coast was a dangerous one, and ships of heavy burden and deep draught were warned from the hidden rocks and quicksands lurking near the tempting land, and by lighthouse and floating beacons were shown that Wharnby was no resting-place by night. Despite these precautions, many a shipwreck in the fierce winter months occurred off the coast, many a gun of distress caused me and

my brothers to look up with meaning and terrified looks from our studies, and watch the pale face of our father as he sat reading by the fire. Many a time have we gone down to the cliff's edge, and gazed over at the battered vessel, struggling with the surging waves, like a living thing, for life.

It was only a scene of danger like a wreck that could tempt my father out of his usual cold demeanour—an icy kind of sternness and an immobility of visage which stood ever in contrast to his black, restless, eyes that shifted from one object to another—from sons to daughter, and daughter to sons—fifty times within the hour. So terribly impassive was his accustomed manner, so little interest did he take in any passing thing or any childish action we might do, that there was a relief in even the sound of the minute guns booming over the great waste, for then *he* was interested, anxious, and more natural. He was the only teacher of myself and brothers, a severe yet good preceptor, and we learned of him rapidly and well. It was a curious sight to witness our studies every morning, in a long, low,

ceilinged room, commanding a partial glimpse of the sea from a corner window. My brother Gilbert was as grave and sedate as his sire ; whilst Edward and I, less considerate and reflective, were constantly meeting with harsh reproofs for our inattention. So partial was my father to his teachings—his only occupation—that he often prolonged them beyond the allotted period of time, much to the dissatisfaction of his children, which was expressed on the part of my younger brother and myself by restless motions on our seats, and loud whispers to each other.

One day, after being detained fully two hours over our usual time, we were reluctantly dismissed—a detention the more annoying to me, as I had been anticipating the launch of a toy-boat from the sands, and the tide had risen during the delay. I gave vent to my displeasure by muttering discontent, as I sauntered through the park with Gilbert and Edward.

“ Never mind, Luke,” said Edward, as he ran by my side, with his light ringlets dancing over his shoulders ; “ to-morrow will do, won’t it ? ”

"We must make it do, it seems," I grumbled.

Gilbert walked by my side for several minutes without speaking; then he laid his hand on my arm, and, giving me an impressive look, said—

"You would wish to have more playtime, Luke?"

"Of course I would."

"But our work-time is the happiest period of our father's life, Luke," said he; "I am only eleven years old, but I can see that. He is fond of teaching us; it is his only pleasure. More playtime do you wish now, brother?"

"I—I—why, no."

"That's right; I feel tired myself very often—especially over the Latin and Greek—but I do not show it; it pains him."

Profiting by the hint, I never attempted a sign of rebellion again, and my father expounded and elaborated without a dissentient look.

About this time our household was enlivened by a fresh face—a rosy-cheeked, motherly-looking woman, who came in answer

to an advertisement for housekeeper, and on whom my father immediately decided. She was about fifty years of age, and had two sons out at sea, concerning whom she was continually narrating anecdotes, to which we boys sometimes listened, my sister paid but little attention, and my father heard with a stoical gravity, never disturbed by any astonishing turn the narrative might take.

Mrs. Higson was a very chatty lady, full of ghost stories, and gifted with a keen appreciation of the marvellous; exceedingly nervous after dark, and subject to spasmodic jumps at nothing; but, withal, she was a valuable addition to the household—an honest, trustworthy old soul, and a God-send to the sons of Elmore. My father required no fashionable attendants now. There was a governess, who called every day, and took Agnes under her especial care—a short, prim lady of forty, very learned in the sciences, deep in the mysteries of grammar, and rules for chaste deportment, and an accomplished pianiste, under whose tuition Agnes profited and progressed, despite the repeated reports of Miss

Berncastle to the parent, on divers subjects connected with Miss Elmore's conduct.

We had no guests at 'The Rest,' as my father had christened his retreat, upon our first arrival at Wharnby. Numerous letters came daily, to all of which my father replied not; then they grew scarce, and more scarce, and finally dropped altogether.

There were many letters, written evidently by one person, that were the last to cease. The address, the only portion that came beneath our vision, was in a fine, small hand, as clear and sharp as if it had been engraved. These letters followed one another, day after day, pertinaciously. My father would read them, appear agitated, and, after a re-perusal, tear them into the smallest fragments before he trusted the pieces from his hand; but he never hazarded a comment concerning them, and they finally ceased, after lingering some time beyond the others. When they came no more, my father used to stand at the window looking on the drive, till the post-hour had gone by. It was evident that he missed the epistles to which he had never returned a single line.



Having attempted to give a picture of my father's home, and of his pursuits and ours, I commence my story four years from the date which made my father a changed man, and altered the whole tenor of our lives.

One evening, early in December, we formed a family group in the dark wainscoted sitting-room, the panels glowing with the roaring fire, which Mrs. Higson had given a final stir to, and departed. My father's favourite seat was an old-fashioned leathern chair, studded thickly with brass nails; and herein he was ensconced on the evening mentioned, pale, silent, thoughtful, with his long black hair (he wore it nearly touching his shoulders) hanging over his white, but puckered forehead; his thin hand, marked with dark veins of unusual thickness, buried within its masses, and affording a support to his weary, aching head. Thus would my father sit for hours, with his shifting restless gaze, so peculiar to him now, with his finely cut lips unnaturally compressed, and full of those bitter thoughts which he took a wild, morbid pleasure in recalling and in fostering, and yet which made him draw in his

breath and writhe as with sudden pain. My brothers and myself were employed in diligently working at our tasks for the morrow, by the light of two wax candles, in massive silver candlesticks which my father particularly prized as the work of a great artist, whose name is a household word amongst us. Agnes was not with us at the time, and the light music of the piano from an adjoining room told of her employment.

"Is that wind?" asked my father, suddenly breaking in upon a silence of above an hour's duration.

We listened, and the heavy, smothered roll of the tempest was heard sounding in the distance.

"It sounds seaward," said Gilbert.

"God help those at sea, then!" said my father, "for there will be a heavy storm to-night."

In a few minutes there were signs of his prediction being shortly verified: the wind increased in sound, and roared and plunged, and made strange noises round the house, whilst, with every lull, the lively music from

the next room came in as an accompaniment.

"What a curious child!" he half muttered to himself; "had I been alone at that age, upon such a night as this, I should have died with fright."

"Aggy is no coward, is she, father?" asked Gilbert, looking up, and glad of a pretext to engage him in conversation.

"Too brave!" he murmured; "I wish she were more like a child; but, then, you are all strange children."

"Strange!" cried I, attempting a laugh; "how do you make us out strange, papa?"

He did not answer: he had resumed his old brooding demeanour, and neither our voices, nor the music in the house, nor the increasing fury of the wind, had more effect upon him, than if he had been a marble image.

The storm gathered—the wind howled—the casements rattled, like peals of musketry—and the whole house seemed rocking in the tempest. Suddenly, across his pallid features, passed a remarkable change: a crimson flush mounted to his cheeks—his teeth ground toge-

ther—his hands clenched—and he leaped from the chair, crying—“Tell her to stop—Tell her to stop, in the name of God! Agnes! Agnes! Agnes!”

The music suddenly ceased—little feet came pattering along the passage—the door opened, and my sister, white with fright, ran into the room.

“Oh! what has happened, papa?” she cried—“what is it?”

“Agnes Elmore,” said my father, grasping her fiercely by the wrist, “where did you learn that music?”

“Which, papa?”

“The last—the—the——”

“The waltz, father?” she inquired.

“Ay, the waltz,”—with a shudder.

“It has been in my music-book a long while—a very long while, papa,” said she—“I played it over with Miss Berncastle this morning.”

“Go and fetch it.”

As she went out of the room, he flung himself back in the chair, gripping one hand within the other

Edward sat still, with his blue eyes fixed upon him ; but Gilbert crossed to his side, and cried—"Are you ill, papa ?—are you ill ?"

"No, my boy — there, go on with your tasks. Well ?"

Agnes re-entered with the music-book.

"This is it."

It was a handsome book—its leaves radiant with gold, and its covers richly gilt morocco ; but my father tore ruthlessly from it about half a dozen leaves, and thrust them on the fire.

"‘Honeymoon Waltz !’—mocking words, coined by a devil," he cried—"there is your fitting place ! Agnes, as you love your father, or his word, never play that waltz again—even when I am away from here, or dead. It is an insult to my memory—it is a curse—it is a brand—a burning iron on my soul !"

"Because——" began Agnes, shrinking from him in his vehemence, but keeping her large eyes fixed upon his face.

"Because it was played on a night about four years ago, when a guilty woman broke my heart, and crushed all hope and love.

Because everything associated with that woman is accursed to me in my disgrace. Because you have never had a mother worthy of the name—a name which if even one of you muttered in your sleep, would make me hate you all my life. You will understand me better when you grow older, children. Understand me sufficiently enough now to know that her name is lost, her home is gone, and such things as that waltz belong but to the past, and madden me by recollection.”

He had hardly ceased speaking, when the bell at the lodge was heard to ring loudly.

We listened—a furious gust of wind followed—and then the bell rang again.

“Where’s Johnson?” asked my father.—  
“Is he not down at the lodge?”

Johnson, our lodge-keeper, a feeble old man, whose office was a sinecure—there being but few calls upon his attention at ‘The Rest’—knocked without.

“Come in.”

“There’s—there’s a ring, Mr. Elmore.”

“I know it,” said my father, briefly—  
“that is the third peal. Listen!”

The bell rang for the third time.

"Who can it be?" said Johnson, with an anxious look at my father.

"Go and see," was the laconic rejoinder.

Johnson—whose nerves had been somewhat shaken by a wild legend of Mrs. Higson's, concerning a wandering spirit, supposed to have been formerly in the corporeal possession of an old fisherman who was found drowned on the sands many years ago, and which spirit was addicted to nocturnal meanderings with a net and top-boots—slowly took his departure, not at all reconciled in mind to a walk down the long avenue, as far as the lodge gates, in the darkness and the wind.

"There must be some mistake," said I, hazarding a conjecture.

"Probably;" replied my father, "there are few visitors—and we want few. We have no friends, and I know none worth the having."

It was some time before Johnson made his re-appearance, which he did with an important air and a bustling manner, indicative of news.

"If you please, Mr. Elmore, it's Mr. Silvernot."

"I do not know Mr. Silvernot; send him away."

"But—but—Mr. Elmore—sir—"

"But what?"

"Mr. Silvernot's the rector of the parish."

"What of that?"

"You don't mean to send *him* away, sir!"

"I am busy—I am ill; another time."

Johnson, very ill at ease, shuffled towards the door, halted on the threshold, and scratched his head.

"I made sure on your seeing him, Mr. Elmore," he stuttered, "and so he's in the parlour, along with the globes."

"Blunderer!" cried my parent, his eyebrows lowering, "show the man in."

"It may be something of importance, papa," I said.

"Importance, Luke!" said my father, with a half bitter laugh, that told how little importance the world and its doings had for his deadened mind.

"Mr. Silvernot!"

Holding the door wide to admit the rector, Johnson announced the coming of the stranger,



whose peculiar appearance took us all by surprise, and even half roused my father from his apathy. He was a little, dwarfish man, hardly five feet in height, perfectly well made, and of good figure, with a pale, wrinkled face, little grey eyes shining through the glasses of gold-mounted spectacles, and black, stubbly hair that stood on end and looked implacably wiry. His white cravat had experienced the effects of the fierce wind, and the neat tie was close under his ear, whilst his black coat, being fastened to the throat by the wrong button and the right buttonhole, made this little personage present a figure more fit for a farce, than for the representative of the church of Wharnby. His age at this period did not exceed two-and-thirty years; but the first impressions made upon us by his deeply lined face, was that he was a venerable son of the clergy, whose years were verging upon two score and ten at least.

He advanced towards my father with a very graceful bow, and extended his hand.

Appearing not to observe the friendly gesture, my father, pointing to a chair, said—

"Be seated, Mr. Silvernot. If your business be of that importance that my children ——"

"Not at all," hastily said the diminutive rector, persisting in standing before my sire with outstretched hand; "not at all. I hope I see you well, sir."

My father, forced to place his hand in that of the stranger's, did so with a marked coldness that apparently had no effect upon him.

"Mr. Elmore," said he, coolly taking off a pair of india-rubber over-shoes, and standing them in the fender at a remote distance from the fire, "you are, perhaps, slightly astonished at my visit?"

"Truly I did not anticipate so unexpected a *pleasure*," with a marked emphasis on the last word.

"Mr. Elmore," said the rector, seating himself, "I am a child of impulse. Throughout my life I have been actuated by impulse, subjected by it to commit actions which I have sometimes bitterly regretted; but, truly, I have no strong command or control over myself. I became a rector through impulse, sir. I was intended for the army,"—drawing

himself up stiffly,—“or the navy, or the bar. I liked the army—intended to choose the army, sir, when one day impulse mastered me. Why not the church? I asked myself. The next day, sir, I was at Cambridge.”

He paused, but my father made no comment.

“Impulse has brought me hither to-night. When you first settled at this retreat, many friends—my parents amongst the rest—called. You did not see them. I did not consider that strictly courteous;—however, no matter. I grieved to see that neither yourself nor children attended divine service at Wharnby Church, and I felt for you, sir. To-night, I was sitting alone at my vicarage (for I am a bachelor), when I thought of ‘The Rest’ on the cliff. Impulse immediately laid a fierce hold upon me. ‘I’ll go and see Mr. Elmore,’ I said. I started off, lost my umbrella, and nearly went over the cliff—but here I am.”

He looked up with a complaisant smile at my father, and commenced warming his hands before the fire. For the first time since his great loss, I detected the twitching at the

corners of the mouth—the half-parted lips—the effort to repress a smile.

“Mr. Silvernot,” said my father, “impulse has led you to a strange action, indeed, when it prompted you to visit a solitary like me. I am a Timon of Athens, and would shun society. This is ‘The Rest’—a rest from a busy, lying world—my first step to the grave.”

Ere he had finished, the heavy, callous look habitual to him was darkening his face.

“Mr. Elmore, you have met with a misfortune?” said the rector, changing his tone of voice into one more kind and gentle, as if he were speaking to a child.

“I have.”

“May I inquire ——?” he began.

“You may not,” sternly interrupted my father.

“Your pardon. I imagined myself a spiritual adviser to you. I am so used to offering all the consolation I can to those of my own flock, that, for the moment, I forgot my place. It was not a paltry curiosity that suggested the crude enquiry, believe me. Suffice it to be, then, a misfortune. Do you know that

all misfortunes are sent as trials for us by One who, with a breath, can make them vanish in His time?"

"I have learned to doubt it. I have no belief in any power, be it Divine or human, that can cancel the injury I suffer from."

"With such doubts, it is my place to aid you with my counsel," said he.

"You are not an old man?" asked my father, suddenly.

"I am thirty-two."

"*I* am forty-four—that is a difference of twelve years between us; and yet you would attempt to school your senior in years, your superior in education, your master in philosophy."

"You know nothing of the extent of my education, or the depth of my philosophy," said the dwarf, warmly. "My education has taught me the wisdom and mercy of the God you doubt, and my philosophy how to profit by it. You are in a dangerous state, sir,"—talking louder; "you are not fit to be left here and brood upon such thoughts. I shall not leave you so long again; no, sir; I shall call very often, so I tell you. There!"

For the second time that night, a faint smile flitted across my father's face. After a pause, my father said :—

“ I said I doubted that Divine power could wholly make me forget my misery. As I feel now, I must believe it. God can turn my brain, or take my soul, and do it that way—no other, sir—no other.”

“ Yes, sir, by prayer. By true and earnest prayer, He can make you a changed man.”

“ I *have* prayed.”

“ With bitterness at your heart, then—with hatred of some object—with the world you affect to despise festering in your thoughts. Have you prayed with your whole heart ?”

“ My heart is broken, or become a stone, I know not which.”

“ You are a misanthrope.”

“ Perhaps so.”

“ You abuse your power of reason.”

“ Very likely.”

“ You abuse that trust reposed in you, when God gave you these children for a blessing to your life. Such children as these should

make no man's existence so full of utter gloom, if he have a father's love. These children should be your care and —— ”

“ They *are* my care,” he interrupted.

“ Care !” cried the little man, very hot and flushed with enthusiasm. “ You may teach them, sir, a few sciences, a few hard names, a few abstract ideas; but can you teach them a true love of God,—the lessons of patience—self-enduring patience,—fortitude and resignation, knowing what you are yourself ?”

“ I teach them all I know—all that I believe.”

“ Boy !” cried the clergyman, beckoning to Gilbert, “ come hither.”

Gilbert rose from his seat, and walked with a fearless step towards him.

“ What is your name ?”

“ Gilbert Elmore.”

“ And age ?”

“ Fourteen.”

“ Is that book you are studying the Bible ?”

“ No, my Greek Lexicon.”

“ Where is your Bible ?”

Gilbert coloured, and made no reply. Mr. Silvernot repeated the question.

"I have not got one. There is a Bible somewhere about, though," added Gilbert, in extenuation.

"Mr. Elmore," said the rector, sternly, "here is your eldest son. Are you training him up to sting you when he grows a man, and when, to all your reproofs, he will say, 'Father, you should have taught me better?' You are incurring a heavy responsibility, sir, in these four children. Good God! sir, it is fearful! These children will be a curse to you, instead of a blessing. Is there no memory of a dead wife, who loved them, to school your unruly mind?"

"Peace, peace!" groaned my father.

"Is there no memory of a father or a mother, who taught you in the days of *your* youth,—nothing to make you turn and cry to God for pardon? Mr. Elmore," suddenly snatching his hand, "you will let me call and see you again? You will not close your doors upon me, till we have seen each other once more?—you will give me that poor promise?"

"Well, well—yes. When will you come?"



"I cannot say," he said, releasing my father's hand, and relapsing into his first odd manner; "it all depends upon impulse. When that attacks me, I shall be here. Don't be alarmed if I knock you up in the middle of the night; I am a strange man when the humour seizes me. I will wish you a good night, now," drawing on his shoes carefully, and rising. "Boys, I trust we shall be better acquainted; I've got a nice little villa, and hope to see you in it some day;—and my pretty miss," stooping to kiss Agnes, "there's a little sister at my father's house, and you must see her too. I hope I have not been too severe," said he, turning to my father; "but it is a good cause I fight for, and I am a zealous man."

My father slightly inclined his head, and sat looking at the fire long after the rector had withdrawn, and the wind had risen to a hurricane.

Long; long after, when the grate was a blackened void, and we sat wondering when my father would speak or make a movement, he still remained in his chair, dreaming. Mrs. Higson,

knocking at the door, made him and us start, at a late hour.

“ Let me have my night lamp, Higson,” he said, in a low voice.

When it was given him, he bade us all “ good night,” and went out of the room saying, half aloud, “ A strange man ! a strange man ! ”

Presently he came back and laid his hand lightly on the head of my elder brother.

“ Gilbert,” said he, in a voice he vainly endeavoured to render firm—“ Never say to me, ‘ Father, you should have taught me better ! ’ ”

With the same grave face and thoughtful air, he went slowly up the broad oaken stairs to his room.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE SILVERNOTS OF WHARNBY.

MR. SILVERNOT came again to 'The Rest,' and extorted from my father the promise for a fresh interview. He came a third, a fourth time—then once a week, then twice, thrice a week, then nearly every day.

My father began to look forward to his coming, and, although he endeavoured to assume an indifference which he did not feel, it was evident that the visits of Mr. Silvernot were gradually having a salutary effect upon him, weaning him from the bitterness of his present life, and softening the heart which he had thought for ever hardened. All this was done, too, with so unassuming an air—with so

evident a desire to do good, merely for the sake or the pleasure of it alone—done in the little rector's odd, whimsical, and impulsive manner, that it won into the better nature of my father by imperceptible degrees, and gradually began to work a change.

Alas! as there will be good and evil angels—good and evil genius—good and evil thoughts, warring against each other in unceasing conflict, in unremitting struggle, till time shall be no more, and eternity shall end all mystery—(so are there although it is not every man capable of distinguishing the face beneath the vizard) good and evil friends marching side by side with every traveller to the goal, crossing each other's path, and making life a great enigma.

What a crude misnomer—'The Rest!' Is there any rest but the grave for the descendants of Adam? Is not peace—peace of mind and body—a fabled invisible on this side the mysterious mark drawn by the Great Hand? Go not, O man, to the wildest solitude where no other human footstep but thine own has trodden, and say,—“Here will I rest”—for

life is not rest, not peace, not content—and they abide not on the earth where thou dwellest! Mr. Silvernot was of that happy disposition which seldom resents an affront, and also a man who was never abashed by a first refusal; so after he had become more intimate with the Elmore family, he broached the subject of Divine worship at Wharnby Church, expressing a wish to see the faces of his new friends beneath its roof. To this hint my father broke out in his impetuous way—“Church! No, no, you will never work so great a miracle as that. What good has church ever done me that I should go dogging to and fro like a great baby of a girl? I went to church once, and no result followed, save that of misery. Can I not pray in my home, with my children, and feel myself as good a Christian?”

“I think not,” said Mr. Silvernot, running his hands through his hair, each single one of which seemed bristling up with argument; “such peculiar notions I look upon as excuses, a trifle stronger than ordinary—but still palpable excuses. Besides, *do* you pray with

your children? Remember the Bible, Mr. Elmore."

"My children can find their Bible now, sir," said my father, "they read in class to me every day."

"That's well, that's very well," said the little rector, his eyes sparkling through the spectacles, and his hands rubbing violently together in his exhilaration, "there's reason in you. I shall make something of you after all."

I am not writing a theological work, or I would give the whole of the elaborate argument that ensued between my father and the rector, concerning private and public worship, suffice it to say that it ended as arguments generally do—in neither party giving way, in my father snatching up his light and abruptly putting an end to the interview, by retiring to his chamber, and in Mr. Silvernot strutting out of the house in the mildest of rages, exclaiming,—“The ground is untenable, Mr. Elmore; your last premise — irrational. Good night, children, God bless you,”—then in a lower tone, not intended for our ears, “and your fool of a father too. Good night, dears.”

Mr. Silvernot returned to the charge night after night, and my father began to flinch.—He would think of it,—how far was it to Wharnby Church across the cliffs? he would not promise what Sunday—he had never said he *would* go decisively—well, some day—well, a month's time—well, next Sunday morning—*there*.

Happy time—short happy time, the few months that followed—one bright blue spot amidst the thunder-clouds—one gleam of sunshine on us all. Oh! that first going to church along the path near the cliff, with the green sea glistening in the light of heaven, the richer green of the landscape bathed in sunlight—the winding road—the tall stone tower, from which rung out the merry clashing bells, peering over the tops of the grove of elms in the distance—the churchyard with its old gravestones telling of centuries past, and its new sepulchres speaking of a few days gone! There were many curious glances at us as we mingled with the flock of our friend the rector, my father with his tall, wiry form, his pale face and long black hair, presenting

an object worthy of attention and a matter for considerable speculation, not to mention my brothers, my sister, and myself—the design for whose costumes was invariably furnished by Mrs. Higson and Miss Berncastle, whose united genius had enveloped us in garments of a peculiar cut indeed, but which we were confidently informed by those respective ladies were models of artistic taste and fashion.

It was a fine old church, that of Wharnby, with a stained glass window of almost fabulous worth—the work of some cunning master in his art, well versed in mysterious pigments and marvellous tints—occupying the eastern side of the interior, and casting its coloured shades upon the stone pavement and broad massive columns, giving the place the air and solemnity of a cathedral. There were high pews lined with a dark drab cloth ; and I felt relieved when we were ensconced within a pew near the pulpit, and hidden from intrusive gaze. My father rested his head between his arms, and leaned forward, with a heavy sigh.

What memories the resumption of an old practice will call up ! — not always of the



gentlest, for the countenance of my father was deeply agitated, as he rose with the rest of the congregation, and the deep rich tones of the organ swelled forth, and the service began.

I found courage to observe when the standing part of the ceremony brought my eyes an inch above the top of the pew—and in this I was assisted by a very large and dropsical hassock, which I invariably surmounted. I had a slight recollection of a fashionable church in London, and of a seat in a corner of a crimson-padded pew, by Aggy's wide straw hat; but this was entirely different: there was very little fashion at Wharnby, and every pew within my range of vision was carefully made a study of. I felt I was 'seeing life' for the first time—and I rather liked it. It was such a change from the eternal dreariness of 'The Rest.'

I took a peculiar interest in the pew adjoining our own, originally promoted by detecting a portion of its denizens taking a peculiar interest in us—chiefly in myself, I remarked, for my father hung back, Gilbert, abashed by so many faces, imitated his ex-

ample ; and Edward and Agnes were invisible to mortal eye, and cast envying looks at my tower of observation—perched upon which, I surveyed human nature in infinite variety.

The pew before me contained five inmates—a portly gentleman, with a highly-polished bald head, who read from a prayer-book of immense size, adorned with great brass hinges and twisted metal work, like some frightfully mechanical cash-box ; a thin, little woman, bending beneath the weight of a white satin bonnet, and half a bushel of flowers on the top of it ; a pretty girl, of about Agnes's age, with a myriad of glossy black ringlets showering round her face ; a very tall young lady, something like her, on a plain scale, with a wisp of a curl straying on each cheek ; and another tall young woman of an uncertain age—but certainly not under forty, for all that.

The young lady with the black ringlets and her elder sister occasionally fixing me with their eyes, caused my immediate disappearance upon a kind of trap-door principle, and it was only at uncertain intervals, when I had recovered sufficient confidence and strength

of mind, that I slowly re-emerged. For all this, I was very particular over my prayer-book, with a slight drawback in being a trifle bewildered between morning and evening service, with the churching of women occasionally intervening and totally confounding me. I could not help admiring the family group, the black ringlets, the stupendous bonnet, and the prayer-book of the cash-box pattern; once I detected a smile on the little girl's face, and was venturing to simper in return, when, being detected by the bonnet, which suddenly jerked up and disclosed a pointed visage very much powdered, I descended from the hassock, and appeared no more. I did not like Mr. Silvernot in his pulpit so well as I did sitting before our winter fire at home; he made me sleepy over the sermon, and then startled me out of an incipient doze, by a terrible bang on the cushion as he clinched some irresistible argument. He was very energetic in the pulpit; he bounced to the right and the left, stood upon tiptoe, and leaned over, vociferating at the top of his voice at the miserable sinners beneath him, crumpled

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his manuscript (which he seldom glanced at) between his hands in his vehemence, and in fact, although a little boisterous, preached as I wish a few of the holy order of reverends that I could name would preach—as if he meant it.

The service was concluded, and my father lingered in his pew, declining to mingle with the retiring crowd, and preferring to wait till the church was empty. We sat there till every pew was vacant, till the clerk had arranged the book marks for the evening, and the organist had come tripping down the aisle with some leaves of music in his hand, and passed into the sunlight, and the pew-opener, an old white-headed man with the palsy—had got fidgetty and nervous, and wanted us to be gone, that he might lock up the church and go home to his dinner.

“We can go now, I think,” whispered Gilbert to my father, who still lingered.

“They have all gone?” looking round.

“All gone!”

“Very well. I am ready.”

He rose, and we followed him along the aisle, which was so silent yet so full of

echoes, so great a contrast to a few minutes since when it was so full of life.

As we entered the churchyard, my father started and halted abruptly, as if with the intention of returning into the church, for at a short distance from us, and evidently awaiting our approach, was Mr. Silvernot, accompanied by the late occupants of the pew into which I had so frequently bestowed my obtrusive gaze.

"My dear Mr. Elmore," said the rector, advancing and speaking in a low voice; "you will suffer me to take advantage of this happy day (happy for you and for me), and to celebrate it by an introduction to my parents and my family. I would not press you—I would not have waited for you, had I thought my waiting would have been considered distasteful or repugnant, but I think you have lived too long alone, and that a little society will be essentially good."

"You are very kind, Mr. Silvernot," said my father, shrinking back; "but—but you pain me. I have lived too long alone to have any desire for new faces meeting mine. I am no companion for ——"

"Stuff!" exclaimed the eccentric rector; "excuse me, my dear sir; but — stuff! A solitary life will make you a madman or a fanatic, and a parcel of savages of your children. I must have no denial."

He snatched my father by the sleeve, and dragged him forward.

"Father, mother, sisters,—I have the pleasure to introduce to you my very esteemed friend, Mr. Elmore.—Mr. Elmore, my father, my mother, my sisters."

"Happy to have the pleasure, my dear sir. I hope I see you well, sir. How *do* you do, sir," said the portly gentleman, in a thick, rolling voice, as he extended a fat hand to my father.

My father shook hands with Mr. Silvernot, senior, raised his hat courteously to Mrs. Silvernot and eldest daughter, who were executing a complicated kind of *salaam* with impressive gravity, smiled faintly at the pretty little girl in the black ringlets, and catching the glance of the lady of ambiguous age, again raised his hat.

"I beg ten thousand pardons, Miss Wigginton," said Mr. Silvernot the younger.

"Mr. Elmore—Miss Wigginton. There," with a sigh of relief, "I have seen the accomplishment of a long-considered project—the introduction of my family to Mr. Elmore. These pretty boys, and this pretty girl, are Mr. Elmore's children,"—calling attention to us by a wave of the hand in our direction.

"How do *you* do, my dears?" said Mr. Silvernot, senior, creasing his broad face into a hundred smiles.

We looked sheepishly at the group as they acknowledged our presence. Gilbert murmured something in a husky voice, and Agnes, ever self-possessed and cool, and at her ease, advanced, like a diminutive woman as she was, and extended her tiny hand as she had seen her father. There was a quivering lip in one of the group, a sigh almost of pain as she did so, kindly inquiring at the same time after the family's health.

"Your only daughter?" asked Mrs. Silvernot of my father, as we sauntered through the churchyard and along the country road.

"My only one, madam," was my father's reply.

“What self-possession !” she chirped, looking up at him with one eye, and fixing the other on Agnes as she tripped along with the younger daughter of the Silvernots, quite a dear friend.—“I often wish I could bring my Celia up self-possessed. There is such a charm about a quiet little girl, don’t you think so, Mr. Elmore?”

“I would rather see my Agnes like—like a child. Although I am a grave and a quiet man myself, yet a grave and quiet girl, never at all put out, never showing a child’s affection, or a child’s curiosity, is painfully unnatural.”

This was a long speech for my father, but he said it with his eyes fixed upon the dusty road, as if he were reading it thereon.

“Well, I don’t know. Now, Arabella, that is *the* Miss Silvernot, Mr. Elmore,” explained she, “was a self-possessed child, and there she is now, a calm young lady with no nerves. Oh ! those dreadful things, the nerves—I suffer from them myself, terribly. You cannot imagine the state of my nerves, Mr. Elmore.”



"Indeed, I rejo—— I am sorry to hear so sad an account," said my father.

"That cool development of—of—of—bless the word! what is it?—but you understand me,—is only demonstrated in one of our family, and that is in Arabella. My husband is nervous, and very irritable; and George—that is my son—is so impulsive, that he is really at some times quite alarming."

She paused; and Mr. Silvernot, senior, who had been anxiously waiting to get in a word, rolled out:

"You must be considered a fortunate man, in having such quiet children, my dear sir, for all your opinions on that subject. Really, I never saw such quiet children in my life! Your eldest son, and that black-eyed gipsy of a boy," pointing to me, "look quite philosophers; and that pretty boy with the ringlets, who has got hold of George's hand, is almost as grave."

"They are quiet children—too quiet."

Mr. Silvernot, the rector, had sharp ears, for he caught the words, as he strolled on in advance with Edward; and after stopping till

they came up with them, said — “I agree with you, Mr. Elmore, they are too quiet. But I’m going to have a change; I’ll set the rogues alive. This is the beginning of a new life, sir. Mr. Elmore,” suddenly, “you must come home with us to-day.”

My father turned ghastly at the thought.

“Not to my rookery, understand,” pointing to a pretty white villa in the distance, “that is as bad—that is as *dull*, as ‘The Rest;’ but to the house — Wharnby House — of father’s. Celia will be a capital companion for Agnes; and there’s Master Redwin, a play-mate for the boys,—he only lives at the next house, across the fields; and I’m quite a boy myself when I like. If it was not Sunday, we would have such games, my lads! But, at all events, you must come home with us to-day, Mr. Elmore?”

My father shook his head.

“No denial; the Silvernotts never take denial,” said the senior of that race. “Come, you must.”

“We should feel it quite an honour,” said Arabella, breaking in for the first time.

"And the boys would like it," said the rector. "Boys, how should you like to go to Wharnby House?"

"If papa will go," said Gilbert, quietly.

"And Master Luke?"

"I should like to go," I stammered.

The mere idea of a fresh house, a new scene—almost a new life—made my heart leap.

"And Master Edward?"

"Oh! very much, if you please."

We were all in a group now.

"And Miss Agnes?"

"Oh! I should be delighted."

My father looked at her. Her eyes were sparkling, her lips parted, and her light, but rich ringlets dancing again as she tossed her head gaily. She seemed more of a child than ever she had been yet.

Was the secret of her premature oldness of thought but the want of companionship with those of her own age? He had never dreamt of that.

"Mr. Silvernot," said my father, after a long deliberation, "the invitation is so sudden

that—that I cannot accept it for myself; but if the children like to go, it would be a change for them, perhaps, and do them good. *I will not come,*” he said, decisively; “another time—another time, I may. But I will be at Wharnby Church to-night, and they can meet me in the evening.”

The rector checked any further entreaty of his family by a look, and said—

“Well, a change will do the boys and Agnes good, I’m sure,” said he, “and so I shall confiscate them; but remember, Mr Elmore, you have made a promise to come and see us—we have you there, sir, we have you there.”

“Then I will leave them with you,” said he, with a sigh, as he stopped at the winding-path that led round to the cliffs and ‘The Rest;’ “I am much obliged to you for the kind invitation; I fear you will find them very troublesome.”

“Not at all—not at all,” said the head of the family.

“Aggy, be a good girl,” said my father, kissing her; “and boys”—aside to us,—

"be good boys. God bless you! A pleasant day!"

He bowed to the Silvernotts, and struck off towards the cliff, walking very slowly and very thoughtfully.

We had gone some hundred yards, and had looked back once or twice at the tall, receding form of my father, when Gilbert stopped.

"I beg your pardons, all, but"—with a wistful look behind—"I must go back."

"Go back!" everybody exclaimed.

"If you please," said Gilbert; "father will be very lonely by himself—I'm sure he will. I should have liked to have gone with you, but—but—I *must* go back."

He slid away his arm from the light touch of the rector, and ran along the road, and down the winding-path, never turning round or looking back till he had reached his father's side, and held his father's hand. We stood watching them; we saw my father stop and speak for several minutes, looking towards us all the time—then they turned and walked towards 'The Rest' again.

"God bless me!" said the rector, blow-

ing his nose violently ; ‘ what a singular boy—what a faithful—what a *remarkable* boy ! Dear me !—dear me !—dear me ! ”

We resumed our journey towards Wharnby House—I, with some scruples of conscience as to whether it were not advisable and filial to bide my opportunity, and desert from the main body on my eldest brother’s principle.

Wharnby House was a large house, of Gothic build, receding some hundreds of yards from the road, but with a sloping garden, full of choice flowers and rare shrubs, reaching to the lodge gates. The perfume of the spring flowers was a pleasant welcome to our new friend’s home as we entered upon the broad gravel walk. .

“ You have a garden, Master Elmore ? ” asked Miss Silvernot, by whose side I chanced to be walking.

“ Yes, miss.”

“ Quite as large as this, is it not ? ”

“ Larger, but not so pretty ; we have more shrubs, and less of these nice flowers.

“ Are you fond of flowers ? ”

“ I don’t know.”

"I am," chimed in Edward, thinking it a favourable opportunity to say something.

"That's a sensible boy," said Arabella, "never say you don't know."

I coloured and began to dislike Miss Silvernot—indeed, from that moment I formed the resolution of transferring those affections to Miss Celia, which heretofore had been hovering and vacillating between that young lady and her sister.—Miss Silvernot was only a year or two behind the age of the rector, but that made her more imposing. A broad green lawn, in the centre of which a fountain was playing, stretched before the house, and as we crossed it and moved towards a flight of stone steps leading to the central door, the figure of a youth, about the age of Gilbert, came running towards us.

"Why, where have you been?" he cried, panting for breath; "I have been waiting for ten minutes at least. Ten minutes!" drawing a tiny gold watch from his embroidered waistcoat: "if it is not nearer a quarter of an hour, I'm considerably out of my calculations."

This young gentleman was received with

smiles, and shaking of hands, and friendly greetings, indicative of a well-known visitor ; and whilst these were being exchanged, the children of Elmore were lost in admiration. There was something particularly attractive in this young stranger, something which we had never seen before, and which made us feel a kind of inferior being in his sight. I have said he was about fourteen years of age ; tall as Gilbert ; with chestnut hair, curling closely to his head ; large brown eyes of a peculiar softness ; a straight Grecian nose ; and lips red, full, and half-parted, as if it were too great a sin to hide the perfect row of small, white teeth beneath. But it was not his face that struck upon us children at the moment ; children are not so much attracted by the features of a new comer, as by the dress, and in this particular he had arrested our entire attention.

He wore a full jacket, elaborately braided, and from an outer pocket, on the left side, peeped the whitest of handkerchiefs ; a grey, satin waistcoat embroidered with the same colour in fanciful devices, and across which



meandered a tiny linked gold chain; a cambric shirt, with glistening studs, that Edward could not take his eyes from; a loose, black neckerchief carelessly, yet artistically, tied, and black trousers strapped over the smallest of patent boots, completed the costume of this juvenile dandy. We say completed, for he was bareheaded, and had evidently not stayed to snatch up his hat when he had caught sight of his friends from the window looking and opening on the lawn.

“Master Redwin,” said the rector, “I have brought you some new friends, and I think you will all get on together capitally. Masters Elmore and Miss Elmore; dear me, I am very ungallant—Miss Elmore and Masters Elmore, my young friend, Master Redwin.”

“How do you do?” said he with a careless nod to Edward and me, and somewhat more of a bow to Agnes. We both hazarded it as our opinion that we were very well, and hoped he was the same, at which expression of our interest in his health he gave us another friendly nod, and said, half-laughing, he hoped so too.

"But, Paul, go in directly—you will catch your death of cold!" cried Mrs. Silvernot.

"Not I," shaking his curly head, "it's so precious hot now, I hardly know what to do. Pooh!"

"Where's your grandmother?" asked Mr. Silvernot.

"Why there she is, to be sure," he cried, pointing to the open window; "you don't think I have been out of her sight all this time—do you?"

Following the direction indicated, we observed, at the open window, a tall slim old lady, with white hair, who was keeping us in view, by shading her eyes with a hand on which several rings were glittering in the sun:

We ascended the steps, and entered the house. Greetings were exchanged between Mrs. Redwin and the Silvernots, and we went through a feeble ceremony of introduction to the aristocratical old lady, which she appeared to receive in a half supercilious manner, and in a way I hardly approved on my own part, and therefore mentally resolved to give it further consideration when the bewildering

effect of these fresh scenes and characters which, with my younger brother and sister, I had made acquaintance with, had been fully recovered from and got over.

With the exception of Agnes, who was perfectly at home, and at her ease, we felt rather out of place. Everything was so new and strange—and we wondered how our sister managed it. Agnes was not an eccentric child, nor particularly old-fashioned—but she seemed never to feel abashed, or appear confounded, no matter in what society she became suddenly placed. She took no very great interest in anything, or anybody, at this age; there was a want of affection in her nature which I have never witnessed in any other child, and never read of in any book or story—a cold, unsympathetic way, which seemed to have been born with her—a sluggishness in her blood, that prompted her to shrink from all evidence of affection in father or brothers, and shunned their kisses and embrace as if there were something in them antipathetic to her own mysterious nature.

I might have written all this at another

time—have chosen a more fitting period in the course of the wild tale I have to relate ; I might have left that which I have penned in this lonely chamber, in my still lonelier solitude, to the further progress of my life ; but thinking of her more this night than is my usual wont, and recollecting events that have long gone before, and that have to be chronicled herein, I partly draw aside the heavy curtain that enshrouds her.

To my story.

I began to like Wharnby House. I began to think that the occupants of Wharnby House and I would get on very well together. With the exception of a slight drawback in my incipient dislike to Miss Silvernot, which, I regret to say, did not decrease upon further acquaintance with that estimable spinster, my opinion of the family in general was rather favourable. Mr. Silvernot, senior, was imposing, but good-humoured ; Mrs. Silvernot unpleasantly fidgetty, but attentive and considerate ; the rector I had liked long ago ; and Celia—ah ! there I was a worshipper. I thought of the prince, who died for love, in

one of Mrs. Higson's stories ; and I felt that matters must shortly be arranged between Celia's papa and mine, or serious consequences must infallibly ensue.

Master Redwin became a pretty good sort of a fellow after a while ; he had given himself a few airs of superiority at first, but they wore away as our acquaintance improved—and he finally condescended to devote his entire attention to myself, as we strolled through the grounds, after an early dinner of cold meats—for the Silvernotes kept strictly their Sunday.

“ I say, Elmore,” remarked this youth to me, “ why don't you go to school ? ”

“ My father is my teacher.”

“ Egad ! what a droll idea. You live at ‘ The Rest,’ they tell me ? ”

“ Yes.”

I felt half inclined to add, “ sir ; ” he looked such an important young gentleman, with his smart hat jauntily set on one side of his head, and a small cane, with a gold mounting, in his right hand, which he twirled close to my eyes in a very reckless manner.

“What profession is your father?”

“Nothing;—what’s yours?”

He coloured at this counter inquiry, and said—“My father’s dead; so is my mother. They were wrecked in the Hope coming home to England. I live with my grandmother. I go to school at Hornwell Hall, fifty miles away. I shall be a rich man when I am twenty-one years old. What a time to wait!”

Having relieved himself of these particulars, he glanced at me, to note the effect they had produced, but, being naturally of a phlegmatic temperament, I received his narrative with a cool “Indeed!”

The gardens pertaining to Wharnby House were of considerable extent, and Master Redwin and I, deep in conversation, had lost sight of the remainder of the party.

“Why, we have lost them!” I remarked.

“What of it?” he said, carelessly cutting a rose off its stalk with a switch of his cane; “they’re not particularly good company to young fellows like us. The Silvernotts are old-fashioned, you see, with the exception of Celia. I like little Cely.”

"Indeed!" I said for the second time, but not with quite such an amount of complete indifference.

"You've a nice sister yourself, though,"—with the air of a connoisseur in matters of beauty;—"it's a pity you all dress so exceedingly droll."

"Is it?" replied I, with burning cheeks.

"Upon my honour it is. Who can be *your* tailor, now?"

"Mrs. Higson," I answered, with all the confidence of twelve years old,—for I had great faith in Mrs. Higson.

"Mrs. Higson!" he cried, exploding into a fit of laughter; "and who on earth is Mother—Mrs. Higson?"

"Our housekeeper."

"By Jove, this is droll," he said, wiping the tears of mirth from his eyes with a laced pocket-handkerchief (evidently one of his grandmother's treasures). "Mrs. Higson, tailor to 'The Rest!' Does she sit cross-legged, like the Great Mogul, Elmore? All crack tailors do."

I began to feel heartily ashamed of Mrs.

Higson, and to consider what a difference in dress there was between my new-found friend's artistically cut, braided and embroidered habiliments, and my own shabby brown clothes, of so indifferent a fit. A bright excuse suggested itself to me.

"Ah! but then you have a grandmother, and she is very clever, and, perhaps, understands these things better than Mrs. Higson."

"What!" he shouted.

I repeated the surmise.

"You don't mean to say that you think my grandmother makes *my* clothes?" he exclaimed, with a look of horror in my face.

"I understood—that is, I thought so."

I felt I had got completely out of my depth. Where was Gilbert—kind, thoughtful Gilbert—to rescue me from this dilemma, and assert the dignity of Elmore, and the honour of 'The Rest?' Why did he run away and leave me the sole defender of the family?

"What a perfectly *astounding* idea!" he ejaculated, after an examination of my features for several consecutive minutes—an operation which particularly embarrassed me;



“why, my grandmother is a lady. She make my clothes! Well, you are an extraordinary young fellow! My tailor comes up from London to attend to *me*! When I want anything new, I drop him a line. That’s the way, Elmore!”

This constant designation of ‘Elmore’ had an overwhelming effect upon me; there was no getting over it, or offering resistance to it. Once I attempted to return the compliment, by addressing the superior being by my side as ‘Redwin,’ but, sticking fast at the first syllable, necessity compelled an immediate and ignominious apology. I was just the gentleman for Master Redwin; he could not have had a better listener, one more quickly dazzled and impressed by his assumptive manner, or more inclined to do him reverence. Acting upon these grounds, he paid great attention to me; and, highly flattered by his marks of almost royal favour—a youth as old as Gilbert, and such a gentleman!—I felt Paul Redwin must be my bosom friend and confidant.

“How I should like to go to Hornwel

Hall," I remarked, as we continued our promenade.

"Should you?" he answered, quickly. "There's good blood in you, Elmore. That's true spirit, friend! Not home-tied, eh? Well, your father could afford it, I suppose, or he wouldn't live in such a precious large house."

"Afford it! Of course, he could."

"Then, just put the question to him, Elmore. Candidly enter into an explanation of your wishes. Think what a polish old Milvertree would put upon you; besides, you would see me every day."

I felt this to be a great inducement, and said so.

"I don't go back for three weeks, so it could all be arranged by that time—couldn't it. Do you think, if I ran over to 'The Rest' to-morrow or next day, and mentioned this to your father, he'd think of it, now?"

Good heaven, what a boy this was! Run over to 'The Rest,'—the dark, gloomy 'Rest,' whose gates were locked and guarded jealously—like giants' castles in old fairy tales—and

mention it to father, as stern, and grim, and fierce as any tenant of those fabulous creations ! Why, this boy must be a man of iron nerve, with nothing appertaining to juvenescence but the boy's look about him.

"I—I don't know, I'm sure," I said, with some hesitation ; "I—I really do *not* know."

"Well, there's no harm in trying. I should very much like you to come to my school. Didn't I hear your curly-headed brother mention another of you—Gilbert, I think ? Who's he ?"

"My elder brother," I answered, proudly, "about your age. I wish you knew him !"

"Oh ! I shall know him by-and-bye. Is he like you ?"

"I believe he is something like me."

"Dress in the same style—antediluvian ?—ha, ha !"

"Ye—es," I replied, echoing his laugh, although extremely doubtful if I fully appreciated the point of his joke ; which appeared to tickle his imagination so much, that, during the remainder of our stroll, he was continually indulging in suppressed inward merriment,

that kept his complexion of a fine shade of purple.

It was a pleasant day, take it for all in all—and I regretted that it went so soon, and that the time for going back to church seemed to have come with such full spread-wings of haste.

We bade Master Redwin good-bye before we started with the rector and his family. Master Redwin's health was not considered sufficiently good by his careful grandmother to allow of his accompanying us to church, and risking the ill-effects of the night-air, although the rosy hue of his cheeks, and the elasticity of his spirits, did not bear particular evidence as to the delicate constitution of my new friend.

"Good evening, Elmore," he said to me. "I shall certainly take 'The Rest' by surprise before I start for Hornwell. What day is most convenient to you?"

"Oh! any day, thank you," I feebly replied.

"No engagements for the present week?" he inquired, "because if you have—state the

days. I don't want my ride for nothing, Elmore."

"No engagements at all, I'm sure."

"Very well, one day in the week you will expect me, and I will broach that little matter to your father. We should make capital chums. Good evening."

He shook hands with me, elevated his hat to Agnes, nodded carelessly to Edward who had been regarding him with open mouth and distended eyes for the last five minutes, spoke a few words of farewell to the Silvernotts, and then ran back to his grandmother.

The rector, his father, mother and elder sister led the van, along the chalky road towards the church, and from the old tower rang out the evening bells. Miss Wigginton with a watchful eye upon the remainder of the party, followed in the distance.

Miss Wigginton was such a bony female, with such protruding, fishy eyes, that I felt my position by her side to be particularly uncomfortable. I imbibed a dread of Miss Wigginton—she was infinitely more terrible in appearance than Miss Berncastle, and I felt

awed before her, and wondered how Agnes and Celia (what a lovely name, Celia, to be sure!) had the courage to keep chatting in her awful presence unmindful of a repeated "hush!" from that stately guardian.

We found my father and Gilbert waiting for our approach beneath the church porch.

"Well, children, have you spent a pleasant day?"

"Oh! very pleasant indeed, thank you, papa," cried Edward, and Agnes and I responded with equal fervour.

"I am glad of that."

We entered the church, and took our seats in the same pew into which we had been formerly ushered, and the Silvernotts filed into the one contiguous, and the rector went round to the vestry. My father was more ~~no~~ody and thoughtful than ever.

The church, by night, with its numerous wax-candles burning (gas was unknown at Wharnby), the repose that seemed to dwell within, as if night lay hidden behind the pillars waiting patiently for darkness, the scanty congregation, the number of empty pews, the

shuffling tread of the pew-opener, all had a soothing effect upon my nerves; for, a few minutes after our estimable friend, the rector, had peeped over the red cushion of the pulpit, I was enjoying the luxury of a peaceful sleep, undisturbed by my parent, who sat stiffly in his pew by my side, with his dark, sunken eyes shifting restlessly to and fro—from the minister to the floor—from the floor round the church, and looking up at the carved rafters, and glancing over his shoulder—but never for a moment still.

## CHAPTER III.

## MASTER REDWIN'S RECEPTION AT 'THE REST.'

"MR. PAUL REDWIN!" said my father, turning the glazed card over in his hand, and looking from it to the portly form of Mrs. Higson (we had no male attendants in the interior of 'The Rest'). "What is the meaning of this? I have no knowledge of Mr. Paul Redwin."

My father was standing before a desk, on which reposed a large book of history, and his sons were ranged beneath, and had been listening attentively to a lecture on the reign of the first Henry.

Edward and I exchanged a meaning glance, but neither of us felt inclined to throw a brighter light upon a subject so evidently



mysterious to my father—we had not the courage.

“Who is this gentleman, Mrs. Higson?” inquired he, tapping his finger on the card.

“Really, I don’t know, upon my word, Mr. Elmore,” replied our housekeeper, crossing her fat hands; “Johnson sent the card up to the house by the under-gardener.”

“Have I not given orders at the lodge that I am never at home to strangers?” said my father, sharply. “There is no object for this man’s coming—Not at home!”

He tossed the card to Mrs. Higson, and arranged the book upon the desk.

Mrs. Higson was taking her departure, when I ventured to speak.

“If you please, father, it is a, a—*gentleman* I saw at Wharnby House, and who promised to call ——”

“Promised!”

“That is, who, who — said he would call and see me, and you, and — and——all of us.”

Gilbert opened his great black eyes to their fullest extent, and stared at me with profound astonishment.

My father, as perplexed as his eldest son, looked irresolute.

"Stay, Higson, a moment," he said ; then looking at me fixedly, he added : "and did you not tell him in return, this officious gentleman, that his visit would be uncalled for, that my house is called 'The Rest,' and that I *would* rest, child?"

"No, I did not, papa, I did not like."

"Silence gave consent it seems.—Admit him, Higson."

Mrs. Higson departed, and my father said :—

"This is the result of your visit to Wharnby House. One incident, trivial as it may be, brings up another, and another, till the turning of a single yard out of one's path, may be the means of many years of bitterness. Had you never gone to the Silvernots, I should not have been pestered by this fresh face."

My father was evidently angry, and I trembled for the reception of my new friend—I wished to make perfectly clear to my father the juvenility of the visitor, but had not the

heart to enter into explanations with that lowering brow.

"Understand me this once for all," said he, speaking in a loud voice as a premonitory hint to the gentleman advancing up the passage; "ask no one to 'The Rest,' and if a man thrust himself upon your notice, actuated by a paltry curiosity—for he can have no other motive—tell him that the Elmores are of sterner stuff than most men, and would shun the artificial life called society, in which most men fritter out their vain existence."

"Mr. Redwin," cried Mrs. Higson, who had considerably waited outside for the conclusion of the speech, and as Paul Redwin advanced, insinuated her round rosy face into the room, to watch the effect of my friend's entrance upon my father.

My father, who had wheeled round with an imperious look at the mention of the name, was completely dumb-founded by the appearance of the visitor, who advanced with a gracious smile, his hat and cane in his left hand, and his right extended, with a frank, easy, unembarrassed air.

"I have much pleasure in making the acquaintance of Mr. Elmore," he said, shaking my father by the hand which he had, almost unconsciously, extended in return; "and this is Mr. Gilbert Elmore, of course," turning to him; "I am very glad to see you, friend."

My father had looked forward to the entrance of an elderly gentleman, or a young man, at least, and the coming of a youth not older than his eldest son, perplexed him how to act. Coldness, or an arrogant demeanour, would be but a burlesque towards this boy, who had had the confidence, or the temerity, to enter the dull precincts of 'The Rest.'

"Miss Elmore is well, I trust, sir?" again turning to my father.

"Miss Elmore is very well, I thank you," replied my father; "will you be seated?"

"Thanks," said Redwin, taking a chair indicated by a wave of my father's hand, and placing his hat and cane at his feet, he proceeded to withdraw his gloves.

"Don't let me disturb your class, sir," said he politely, almost regally, as if he were

according permission to proceed. "Pray complete the lesson—I am in no hurry."

My father turned away his head; one of those smiles, more frequent since he had known the rector of Wharnby, crossed his deep-lined face.

"The lesson is not of grave importance, *Mr. Redwin*," said my father, with a strong emphasis on the title by which he addressed him; "you are a playfellow—a new little friend of my son Luke's, I understand."

"I saw your son, Luke, at Mr. Silvernot's last Sunday, and we had some conversation together," said Master Redwin with dignity; "I told him I should give a look-in during the week. How are you, Elmore?"

"Quite well, thank you."

"And Master Edward?"

Master Edward murmured something respecting a perfect state of health.

"I suppose, *Mr. Elmore*," said my friend, turning to my father, "your son, Luke, has mentioned the subject which I have come hither to-day to urge upon your attention?"

"I cannot say he has."

"I am purely disinterested in this affair, of course," said Paul, "but it suggested itself to me, that these boys," with a careless look in our direction, "would get on better at a school—a first-rate school, such as mine—than under the tuition of a parent—eh, now?"

There was a gathering gloom on my father's face that I did not like the appearance of: it was ominous of evil.

"It suggested itself to *you*?"

"To me, sir."

"I should feel flattered by the reasons for your inter— your suggestion."

"Oh! they would strike anyone," said Redwin, rattling on perfectly unconscious of a coming storm; "the reason for the suggestion was, of course, my introduction; the reasons for leaving home are numerous."

"The introduction of my children—that is to say, their general appearance and behaviour at first sight—inclined you to think that they would get on better at school, sir?"

"That is it, Mr. Elmore."

"Were they so cubbish and so ignorant, and did such little justice, or such strict justice, to their father's teaching, then?"

"No, no!" stammered Master Redwin; "but they, they know nothing of—of—in fact—what boys generally know."

"Now the 'numerous reasons' for leaving home, *Mr. Redwin*."

Master Redwin, with a vague idea of something wrong, but still unconscious of giving offence, boldly went on.

"Why there is," he said, "more scope for energy—more desire for distinction—more change—more pleasure—more life on their side. On yours there is the annoyance of teaching dispensed with, and you could find something better to set your mind to—something more suitable. That's how *I* put it."

Now nine out of ten men would have been amused by my friend Redwin's *nonchalant* manner, and have drawn him out accordingly; but my father, having overcome the first novelty of his appearance, and never being in a vein for jesting at another's weakness, or another's folly, but on the contrary, extremely irritable and impatient, took this grotesque assumption of the child in a light that few other men would have done or

thought of. My father leant across his desk, and fixed Master Redwin with his eyes, till that young gentleman, despite his habitual composure, reddened, then turned pale.

"I hardly comprehend the latter part of the argument, Mr. Paul Redwin," observed my father, quietly.

"Why, you *must* find teaching dry work—irksome work, I mean," said Master Paul, with an effort to maintain his cool deportment.

"Wherefore?"

"Because a gentleman must feel out of place at it."

"You say you go to school?"

"Yes, sir."

"Boarding-school?"

"Of course."

"A school, where hard teaching for five months gives a letter of credit for the sixth to be passed at home, free of all restraint—passed in impudence, and sometimes in affectation—very often both."

"Sir, I hardly comprehend you."

"Impudence, in intruding upon a neighbour's house unsolicited and uncalled for;



affectation, in aspiring to be thought a fine gentleman, quite a man—a reasoning man, too!—when but a child in years and experience. I hope you comprehend me now.”

The bitterness with which my father made the above speech was not worthy of its object—it was too harsh a severity, and I felt the blood burning in my cheeks, and on my brow.

Looking towards Gilbert, I saw that his face was scarlet, too—evidently the same idea had suggested itself to him, and he blushed, like myself, for the treatment of my friend, who, totally unprepared for such a ferocious onslaught of words, sat on his chair, with heaving chest and twitching hands, irresolved how to take it.

My father was turning over the leaves of the History of England, when Paul Redwin jumped to his feet, white with passion.

“Sir, I wish, for your sake, I were an older man.”

“Why so, *Mr.* Paul Redwin?”—calmly looking up from the book.

“Because, sir, I should be entitled to call

you out, for so cowardly an insult. I do not know whom you may be, but I would have you to know that I shall be as rich as you are at twenty-one, sir, and that I have a claim to be called a gentleman even now—which you have not, and which you cannot have. You dared not have uttered to any other than a child, the uncalled-for aspersions you have thrown on me. You remind me well, I am but a boy, sir—some day I will remind you I have become a man.”

He stayed to hear no more—but, snatching up his hat and cane, tore out of the room.

“John—my pony.”

We could hear the grinding of horses’ hoofs on the gravel outside—and then a rapid galloping away, told of Paul Redwin’s departure from ‘The Rest.’

“We will proceed with the lesson,” said my father—over whose features I thought I could detect a passing shade of remorse. “Stay!”—shutting the book —“What was Henry the First surnamed, Gilbert? Let me see that you all have remembrance of my recent lecture. Surnamed——?”

“Beauclerc.”

“Date, Luke?”

“1745.”

“What?”

“1745,”—with lesser confidence.

The remainder of the day Luke Elmore was in disgrace.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE EVIL NIGHT.

THE unceremonious manner in which Master Redwin and my father had taken leave of each other, was the cause of great mental distress to me for several days. I had a great respect for Master Redwin, and a great ambition to hold a respectable place in his opinion; and now, what could he think of me? And that stately grandmother, too, who had awed me into reverence, what was her opinion of the Elmores? and my dear friends, the Silvernotts, —why, it was enough to break off all friendship between us.

But our friend the rector came as usual, in impulsive moments, and chatted away as

briskly as ever, and brought invitations for us, which my father, with a lively remembrance of the result of our first visit to Wharnby House, invariably declined. It was evident Master Redwin had not mentioned the incident at 'The Rest,' and my father studiously avoided any recapitulation of the same.

But my father could not wholly sink back to the old frigidity of his life, and close the doors of 'The Rest' against the world. My father had been introduced to the Silvernot family, and could not refuse admission to them when the carriage brought the senior members to the house on morning visits. That he hated these morning calls, I was convinced, by his nervous, impassioned manner after they had come to a conclusion; but in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Silvernot, the rector, and his sister, Arabella, he was calm, grave and courteous, and bowed them to the carriage with the chivalrous attention of that old time when he was a man of fashion, and Beau Elmore at his club.

He continued his visits to Wharnby Church of a Sunday morning (the evening service he

had altogether eschewed), when the weather was sufficiently fine to allow of his taking us the customary walk along the cliffs: ride, or let us ride, he never would. There was a stately old carriage, with his crest emblazoned on the panels of the doors, dusty and mud-bespattered, shut up in the stables, of which he kept the key locked within his desk; but there was no coachman, no horses—nothing of the past grandeur, which would have been at that time but an aggravation of his misery. 'The Rest' was sufficient for him, and for all his wants and pleasures—why should it not be for the children growing up around him? Could he not carry out the plan he had been so long building up in his busy brain,—to be isolated with his family, and in that isolation to feel happiness, by seeing content on the faces round about his table? He had dreamed so. It was a wild dream, and he had better have died before the waking came upon him!

There was no particular restraint put upon the actions of myself and brothers, although we felt it—felt it the more for the lack of tangible evidence to the contrary. With my

sister Agnes, Miss Berncastle had evidently received some secret orders ; for that respected lady never left her charge for half-an-hour at a time—accompanied her in all her walks, and often followed her from room to room of the house, like a trusty guardian. My father could not have told of what he was afraid, and yet he had a lurking distrust of her being lost or stolen, or of her meeting chance acquaintances that might tell her of the pleasures of society—of the gaieties of the world around her, and make her sigh for that brilliant apple—fashionable knowledge. It was certain, all talk of amusements was strictly interdicted—on dancing was laid a fearful prohibition—and it was only at Miss Berncastle's express solicitation and with a reluctant groan that he had consented to her learning the piano-forte. And yet, he wondered she was not more a child—wondered why, with all his kindness and affection—for he loved her very dearly—she gave so poor and forced a return—why, with her brothers for playfellows, she preferred her solitary studies in the music room.

Agnes had a spirit of opposition in her, too,

which she disclosed at times, much to the disquietude of Miss Berncastle. When that latter lady was more than particularly watchful, Agnes was more than particularly capricious—wandering about the house in search of some piece of music which she had carefully concealed beforehand, and leading the lady, who was short of breath, and rather stout, a long, rambling journey to the roof of the house and back again, taking in as many stairs as it was possible to find. Miss Berncastle's chief reason for pertinaciously following Agnes, was the inclination my sister had to absent herself on any trifling errand, and descend to Mrs. Higson's room, where she would remain, if allowed, the entire day, listening to the house-keeper's bloodthirsty legends with breathless attention. This erratic propensity, combined with a trying calmness of demeanour when Miss Berncastle was most excited, and a love of opposition and contrary views to her governess on almost every subject connected with her education, made that lady's place far from the most agreeable. There was but one thing had effect on Agnes Elmore, and



that was Miss Berncastle's threat of stating her conduct to her father, when, in most cases, she gave in, and resigned herself to her studies with a great effort at attention.

I have said that there was no particular restraint exercised upon the actions of my brothers and myself, so that it often happened, upon our Wednesday and Saturday afternoons—our half-holidays—we stole out of 'The Rest,' and made for the sea-side.

About half a mile from our house was a rude cutting in the cliff, said to have been made by smugglers many years ago, which, by a sloping, gradual descent, opened upon the sands beneath. Down this cutting, well known at Wharnby by the name of 'Freeman's Gate' (Freeman having been a desperate smuggler in his time), we regularly descended on the afternoon I have specified, and amused ourselves by launching miniature ships and boats. Sometimes, but very seldom, our father accompanied us in these expeditions, and would sit on some rough seat, formed by the white cliff, gazing at the sea, or vacantly staring at an open book

upon his knees, too absorbed to read. It was as lonely on the sands as at 'The Rest'—there were no visitors at Wharnby, and, with the exception of a shrimp-dredger at times, or a boatman struggling to get off of a sand-drift, on which he had run aground, it was as gloomy a place as any round the coast.

One Wednesday afternoon, about a week succeeding the event chronicled in Chapter III., Gilbert, Edward, and I, (the latter young gentleman staggering under the weight of an enormous ship, with real canvass sails, and ropes tarred in the most natural style,) descended the stony path of Freeman's Gate, and made their appearance on the sands. The tide was very low, and the new vessel, which had been a study of mine for months, refused to be launched upon any principle whatever, but ungracefully stuck fast at every attempt we made.

"The tide runs very low to-day, Gilbert," I said, "let us go further round the cliffs."

We sauntered along till we were stopped by a well-known mass of low rock, rugged and heaped in the wildest shapes, and over-

grown with brown sea-weed, rendering a firm footing an impossibility. Over this, when the tide rose, the sea dashed, and foamed, and roared, with a noise that could be heard in the rooms of 'The Rest.'

"Then we shall not see the ship in the water to-day," said Edward, after an ineffectual attempt for the last time, in which I had fallen on my hands and knees, and nearly crushed it beneath me.

"Yes, we will," I said resolutely, as I gathered myself up—"oh! yes we will, though."

"Why, how can we?"

"I've heard Mrs. Higson say, about half a mile over the rock there's a bay. Don't you remember that story she told us of the Dark Man of the Bay, who was brought from over sea by French pirates and murdered there?"

"And whose ghost walks there every day and every night," said Edward. "Oh, yes! I'm going there, I am."

"I shall go," I said, decisively.

"Are you so foolish, brother Luke!" said

Gilbert. "Why, it would be madness to cross over this treacherous rock, I tell you. You shan't go, Luke!"

"But I will go," said I, fiercely (for with my brothers, I am sorry to confess, I was impetuous and headstrong). "If I'm alive, I'll cross the shingle to the bay before an hour is gone, and launch my ship."

"Go on," said Edward, tauntingly; "let's see, Gilbert, how far he'll go, before he comes sneaking back again, like old Johnson's terrier after a sound whipping. Go on, Luke."

My brother Edward was rather a favourite of mine, but I had great difficulty in restraining myself from flinging the ship at his curly head. Gilbert began to urge me to return, but I had already clambered up the rock, and stood with my ship in my arm, ready to advance.

"Am I to go alone? You, Gilbert, too!"

"It is the height of folly! You cannot launch the ship, if you reach the bay alive."

"Yes, I can. The declivity breaks off suddenly, and there's deep water. Are you coming?"

Gilbert, who had not expected such firmness in my nature, and had still his misgivings of my resolute appearance being but a bombastic pretension which would soon fail me, shook his head, and said—

“I shall go home with Edward. Come, Ned.”

“Cowards !” I yelled. I was foaming with rage—my teeth gnashed together with passion, as I saw them turn and move off in the direction of home. I went on—I felt I would have gone on to spite them, had I been sure of death upon the rocks, and that the tide would have been dashing over me, and made my grave there before the hour had passed.

A bend of the cliff soon hid me from my brothers' view ; and, firmly resolved upon fulfilling my promise, I staggered over the slippery rock, clutching my ship tightly to my breast. I was alone, with the giant, ghost-like cliffs frowning down upon me on my left, the broad green ocean leaping and tossing on my right, and the waves breaking into spray with a murmuring, ominous noise, as they dashed against the breakers. The tide was

still running down ; I had plenty of time to spare, and, disguising to myself the sense of loneliness allied to fear, I kept on towards the bay where, years ago, the French pirates brought their living victim, and stole away again, leaving a white, upturned face upon the sand. Harassed by the latter thought, and excited by the novelty of my position (for I could scarcely remember five consecutive minutes spent alone during my short career), I forgot the precarious nature of my path, and suddenly fell with violence amongst the sunken rocks, splitting into twenty pieces the ship, which, in conjunction with my brothers, I had expended so much time upon.

For five minutes I remained in a dreamy, half-conscious state, huddled, with the fragments of my ship, amongst the chalky heaps and wet sea-weed, gazing out of my half-closed eyes at the waves rolling and plunging in the distance.

With a vast amount of courage shaken out of me by my fall, I got upon my feet, and stood meditating as to my future progress, with a rueful look at the ship, which not the

finest water in the world could have sustained, or been of assistance to, from that time forth.

Should I return? I looked in the direction of home. I had a vague hope that Gilbert had not deserted me, and that I should see his figure in the distance coming towards me, in which case I might have given a more attentive ear to his expostulations, and returned with him. But he was not to be seen.

"Yes, I will go on," I said, with a frown at the prospect far ahead of me—"I said I would reach the bay, and reach it I must. I cannot launch my ship—but go I will."

I shouted the last words in fierce defiance, as if I had a host of living witnesses to my intention standing round me, and then obstinately persisted in continuing my dangerous journey. Leaving the broken ship on the rock, a landmark where I fell, I, with more precaution than had been taken heretofore, made towards the bay, slipping at every second step I took, but in most cases saving myself from a fall by grasping at the jutting points of the cliff with my left hand.

What will they say at home, Luke Elmore

of 'The Rest?' But Luke Elmore was deaf to any remonstrance — every wavering step towards his object, rendered him more determined in it, and the landmark on the rocky beach was soon far behind and lost.

It became still more precipitous as I proceeded — immense masses of cliff, that had fallen from above, blocked up the way in some places, but I clambered over them, and kept on in my fixed resolution :—here and there were patches of half mud,—half sand, into which I sank to my knees, and waded through to the sea-stained crags beyond.

Surely I had gone more than half a mile ! It was an hour since I had left my brothers, and yet nothing in sight but rock on rock, with the sea-weed, in green, brown and red masses, thick upon them, or hanging round fresh-fallen portions of the cliff, in slimy filament, like hair must hang on drowned sailors' heads, or round that face of the foreigner immortalised in my memory by Mrs. Higson, who was murdered in the bay. Horrid thought ! How cold it made the wind blow from the sea !



Still onwards. Two more falls—the last a crasher, from a rough mass of chalk, which seemed immoveable as Fate, but which gracefully revolved as I reached the top, and shot me forcibly some three or four feet amongst my old companions. Five minutes calm deliberation of the sea again, with the shingle before me brilliantly illuminated with coloured lights, and then I continued my way, with a very manly-looking gash meandering across the forehead, and descending to the bridge of my nose in a serpentine course. I stopped once more for serious reflection. I had to return the same way—there were all these difficulties to be again encountered—I felt faint and exhausted—should I go on? I deliberated,—yes, I would go round that great overhanging cliff, that seemed to be dashing forward to meet and breast the sea—that cliff, on which the friendly lighthouse gave its nightly warning-signal to ships far out upon the deep—I would go round that, and then think again.

It was farther than I had calculated on, and I could hear some church-bell striking five very faintly in the distance, as I reached

the jutting point. Five o'clock! It would be seven, and nearly dark, before I reached Freeman's Gate again—what *would* they say at home! I stood beneath the cliff—I looked round—there was the bay a hundred yards from me. With a wild hurrah that startled even myself after I had given voice to it, I ran towards the bay, leaping from rock to rock, staggering, reeling, plunging—till with a dash I sprang from the last crag into the deep, soft, welcome sand. “I said I would do it!” It was a bay of considerable extent, and lighted by the sun, which another three-quarters of an hour would behold sinking into that great dreary sea, it had a bold imposing effect, flanked as it was by the irregular curving cliffs, their white expanse dotted here and there by samphire.

There was no deep water. Whoever asserted that statement, as a fact, must have been a man without the slightest grain of consideration for his species in his whole composition. Had my ship been sound, and had I borne it safely, my chance would have been equally the same as at the spot so far away, where

I had left Gilbert, and the twin brother of sister Agnes. The water was about the same distance from the cliff—so far as I could judge—but it was coming up, instead of going down. Making allowance for a moderate quantity of falls, I had time enough for a safe return—so I flung myself full length on the sand, and lay panting from my recent exertion, looking at the sea.

I thought of Edward's taunts ; of Gilbert—that bold brother Gilbert—whom I would have followed through fifty times such danger, and yet who deserted me ! I could hardly keep the tears back, when I thought of it. I had such trust in him—such belief in his love for all of us—such an instinctive knowledge that he loved me more than all the rest ; and yet he had left me to go my way alone.

“ It is not cowardice,” I murmured to myself ; “ look at his dark, unflinching eyes—and his great, white forehead—and his bold, lion-like look ! No, no—it was spite. He would not give in to me, he does not care for me ! ”

I buried my hands in the sand, as deep as I could thrust them, and tore them out again,

to dash their contents wildly round me. I did not take into consideration the reverse side of the medal—did not ask myself if I gave in to his wishes, or had not a little selfish spite to gratify, when I so obstinately set forth upon my journey. But my thoughts precipitately took another direction—a subject a trifle less pleasing than my brother Gilbert's ingratitude even; for, chancing to alter my position, I beheld a tall figure, with a white face, and black moustache and beard, standing by my side, and gazing down upon me!

The French stranger (I believe Mrs. Higson said a French noble) flashed to my startled recollection—and, with a half-suppressed shout of horror, I scrambled to my feet, and reeled several paces backward. The figure stood regarding me with a calm, fixed look of attention, but uttered not a word.

He was very tall—evidently some inches above my father's height—and standing there before me, with a horseman's cloak draping his form, and no contrast to his stature, save my diminutive self a few yards distant, he had all the appearance of some giant of a past age,

who had returned for a few minutes to life, with the intention of looking about him, and seeing how the present world was progressing.

I felt transfixed with horror; he was evidently the Frenchman; and Mrs. Higson was, for the future, to be implicitly believed—that is, if I were ever lucky enough to see that round, ruddy face again.

“Well, my extraordinary specimen of juvenility—are you dumb?” he said, at last, in a clear, deep voice—a ringing kind of voice, as if his throat was lined with bell-metal.

“I—I beg your pardon, sir—I took you for——”

“For what, my ‘raw head and bloody bones’ looking youth—for what?” he said, quietly observing me.

“For a man that was—that was murdered on these sands, one moonlight night, by—by French pirates.”

There was a slight flickering kind of smile upon the thin, red lips beneath the black moustache—a sinister kind of smile, that had no merriment in it, and that revealed, for a moment, white, even, gleaming teeth.

"Are you frightened at ghosts, and spectres, and mystic characters, in shrouds and grave-clothes, born of wild legends and rambling story-books, boy?" he asked.

"I am——a little, sir."

"And yet you lie on the sand in this desolate and cut-throat-looking spot, coolly dreaming of the past. Was it the past or future, boy?"

"The past."

"Then henceforth, dirty and disfigured-looking child, remember the past is but for fools; the future, but for dreamers; the present, fit alone for men."

This observation I had nothing to reply to, so stood shuffling the sand in a heap at my feet.

"And now, boy, attention. I *am* the Frenchman."

I gave a sudden and spasmodic jump, and gasped out—"Who was murdered?"

"Were there *two* then?" he enquired.

"Not—not that I was aware of, sir."

"Then, I can be no other than the one, can I, boy?"

I thought not.

"Attention, lad," said the stranger; "where does that infernally uneven road, or beach, lead to?"

"To Wharnby."

"What an ass, not to keep the path on the cliffs," he said; "surely I must have had a romantic fit on me, for a sea-side walk, like a maudlin boarding-school girl, at the fourth teen, to come crawling down that path instead of progressing direct. Humph!" said he, musingly; "it must be three miles back. Which way have you come hither, lad?"

"That way," pointing towards Wharnby.

"Then that way goes Jacques Vaudon."

He strode a few paces forward, then stopped.

"Follow me, boy," he said; "and here, take this—my arm has ached enough with it in good truth. Forward."

When he tendered me a portmanteau, which had not been observed for the cloak that partially concealed it from my view, my doubts concerning the authenticity of his fearful statement were dispelled, and convincing

proofs as to his identity with the rest of creation were fully established, for I had never heard or read of any respectable ghost travelling about with heavy luggage; so, reconciled to his mortality, I took the portmanteau from his hands, and prepared to follow him, not a little interested as to how his ghostship would get over the more difficult portions of the journey between the Frenchman's bay and Wharnby.

"Upon my word, boy," said the stranger, pausing before the steep and slimy crag that formed the bend of the cliff; "this is choice walking. Do you indulge yourself in this way often, *mon enfant*?"

"This is my first journey to the bay, sir."

"May your journey in life be as smooth, you little wretch," said he; "if I get to Wharnby, without a compound fracture, I shall be a happy man."

We rounded the point, and in a few minutes were too deeply engaged crossing perilous gaps, and stepping from rock to rock, for further conversation. I could not help smiling



at my companion's gingerly tread across the rock—his sudden leaps over doubtful heaps of sea-weed which seemed covering some pit-fall — his calm, unmoved face when he turned to see if I were following in his track, so white and corpse-like, in contrast to the black beard and moustache, which gave so majestic a look to his peculiar cast of features.

He fell twice before he reached the spot where I had finally prostrated myself in reverence, but gathered himself up again in a cool, unimpassioned manner, solacing himself with a few oaths in French and English, uttered without elevating his voice above the usual tone, as if it was his duty to swear in such a position, but to swear in a cool and gentlemanlike manner — quite in a business kind of way.

“I'll take my portmanteau, boy,” said he, stopping to witness my recovery from a sudden slip and fall, in which I had come with no light weight upon the article in question. “Thank you. Straight on, I suppose.”

“As straight on as you can go,” I said, with a grim smile.

"Through this, my infant maniac?" he said, calmly pointing to the mud and sand before-mentioned, and which bore the imprints of my late journey through them.

"There's no other way."

"Droll!"

He sank a considerable depth, and, with no slight exertion, finally gained the other side. Suffering with intense pain from bruises and cuts in various parts of my arms and legs, and heartily sick of my adventurous exploit, I, despite of all, burst into a fit of laughter at the efforts of the gentleman to force his way towards the opposite and uninviting bank.

A peculiarly expressive scowl rewarded me for my unseasonable merriment when I had joined him and was by his side. It was a scowl that totally expelled all inclination to laugh—the eyes seemed to retreat into the head, and yet to concentrate a flashing fire within them—the thick eyebrows seemed dropping over them like a curtain—and as he stood before me, fixing me with that annihilating glance, vague fears of being in the presence

of the Evil One himself came across my excited imagination.

"Ill time for jesting, my lad," he said, in his mild voice, "and a mocking laugh is to me especially, at all times, distasteful. Understand me—the place is a desolation. Who would be the wiser if I went on to Wharnby alone, and unaccompanied?"

I felt my heart collapsing with dread. Oh! that frightfully meaning glance! Was he jesting with me, or did he threaten me in sober earnest? I trembled in every limb.

Satisfied with the impression he had produced, he continued his way, and I, with some suspicions as to the good intentions of my companion, kept a few steps in the rear.

One of the mountainous heaps of chalk occasioned by the fall of a portion of the cliff over head, brought him again to an abrupt halt. He stood waiting for my approach, and I, chary of advancing within arms' reach, stopped about twenty yards from him. The sun was going down—the tide was coming in with a roaring noise—the night would soon be deepening.

"Have we to climb this?" he asked.

"Yes—and some three others."

"And you came this way?"

"I did."

"For what purpose?"

"To launch my ship."

"Indeed!—I see no ship."

"I fell with it, and broke it."

"Why did you go on to the bay, then?"

"I said I would go—I had made up my mind."

Leaning his back against the chalk, and placing the portmanteau at his feet, he folded his arms and looked full at me.

"All this is a lie, or you are mad. A boy like you, for no object in the world, to come a path that would deter ninety-nine men out of a hundred. To whom do you belong?"

"The Elmores, of 'The Rest.'"

"Indeed!"

For the first time his voice, usually so calm, changed into a low, deep tone, and, for a moment or two he breathed hard, like a man who had been running.

"Has your father so little care for you—so

little heed for a son, as to let you come so dangerous a way as this?"

"My father never dreamed of such an action on my part."

"Possibly," said he. "Let us proceed."

We struggled up the mound, and descended on the other side, displacing huge fragments at every step that went rolling over the rocks with a crushing noise.

"Hark!" said he, raising a gloved hand—"some one calls."

I stopped and listened.

"Luke! Luke! Luke!"

"It is Gilbert—it is my dear brother Gilbert," I shouted, dashing forward; "he has come to seek me."

In a minute more he was holding me in his arms.

"Thank God, you are alive!" he said, in a tremulous voice.

"I had almost given you up for dead. Have you been hurt at all?"

"Not much, dear Gilbert—I have a gash across the forehead. I am very glad you have come after me. I thought you were at home."

"I only went to the gates of 'The Rest,' and saw Edward safe; then, I returned."

"Where have you been all the time, then?"

"Full length on the rocks, an hour or more—the sun was shining when I fell," he said.

"Are you hurt?"

"Not much. A sprained ankle, I believe. But what's a sprain, Luke?—I have found *you*."

"Quick, quick!" cried the stranger in our ears—"do you not see it is getting pitch dark, and we need a bright noon-day to save our lives in such a place as this. Come along."

"Who is this?" said Gilbert.

"I do not know—I met him at the Bay. Let us follow him."

I moved quickly forward; but Gilbert, after one or two ineffectual attempts to keep up with me, hung back.

"I cannot go quite so fast, Luke," he said, with a suppressed groan of pain—"my hip is hurt, I think—but you make haste, and ——"

"Lean on me, Gilbert," I said. "Oh! I am so sorry I came this dreadful way. It is

all my fault—it is all my wicked obstinacy of temper. You are hurt very badly. I know it—I know it!”

“Nonsense, Luke, nonsense,” he said, with a forced laugh. “Let me lean on you, then, and we shall get back all right enough. Come, Luke.”

But my assistance was of very little service to him, and we slipped at every step. The tide was rising rapidly, too—it was but a few feet from us, and the crested heads of the waves seemed rearing towards us as if they claimed a lawful prey.

A thought struck me. The stranger was some distance ahead. “Wait here a minute, Gilbert,” I said, “I will ask that man’s help.—One minute.”

I flew along with unerring feet, and reached his side.

“Stay, stay!” I gasped forth; “you must come back. You are a strong man—my brother is hurt; help me to carry him home. For God’s sake, do not hesitate! Are you a man, are you a man?” I shrieked, wringing my hands.

"Do you see the tide?—Do you see the night coming on?—Do you see how this hell's-own pavement stretches on—on—on, without a break? I can do nothing. Each one for himself."

"You shall not go!" I screamed, clinging to his cloak; "you are not so base a coward—so great a villain—as to leave us. By your fear of God's vengeance, come back with me, sir. I am but a boy, but *I* am not afraid."

He hesitated—he stood with a brooding gaze upon the wet rocks, as if he were calculating some chances in his brain. He looked up:—

"I will return with you. It was but a momentary pang of fear, and yet I am considered a brave man, too," he said. "Well, well, brave men have a twinge of dread once in their lives—mine has gone, I think. I must relinquish the portmanteau. Can I put it anywhere out of harm's way?"

"Impossible! Quick—quick!"

"Then, ho! there," he cried, with a ringing laugh; "if there be any friend floating



ahead—a distressed mariner, whose ship has foundered, here's dry clothing for you. Ho, there!"

He swung the portmanteau round his head, and relinquished his grasp. It whirled through the air, and then fell with a heavy splash into the water.

"Now I am ready," loosening his cloak. "Now, mad offspring of the Elmores—quick, yourself!"

He hurried after me, folding his cloak upon his arm as he did so. I gave a wild cry, as I reached Gilbert—he lay cold, pale, and senseless against the cliff!

"He is dead!—he is dead!"

"Tush! but a swoon, child," said the stranger, covering him with the cloak. "Now, help me to carry him. Stay," he added, "I will carry him alone, and you lead the way. Are there any more of those d—— chalk banks?"

"I do not know—I think so. Follow me, sir—follow me."

We hurried on, occasionally slipping right and left, crunching the sea-weed beneath our

feet, and sending showers of water splashing in the air—past the rocks, which looked overgrown with green, lank hair—by coloured weeds, all one dark brown to us in the night fast coming on—over the high mounds of fallen cliff, and chalk, and earth—through mud and sand, and fast accumulating water. Shall we never see Freeman's Gate again? I kept on at a rapid pace; my footing seemed more secure in the darkness, and I seldom swerved from a sure tread upon the treacherous breakers. It was dark night now, with the stars shining over head.

"How is Gilbert?" I asked.

"I do not know. He is still insensible, but an hour will set him right enough. The fellow's plaguey heavy. Quick! there, boy—haste!"

We were a foot deep in the sea, and the waves dashed over us as they came rushing in. I could hear the subdued oaths of my strange acquaintance behind, as he stumbled in my track.

A glare of lights attracted my attention in the distance. My companion observed it at the same time.

"What is that, young Elmore?"

"I do not know, but I think—I hope it is Freeman's Gate, and that they are looking for us. Yes, hark! they are calling."

The loud halloo rang through the silence of the night. Friends were at hand with help, if needed.

"Halloo! Halloo!"

We were treading the sand again; the servants of 'The Rest'—the gardeners, the lodge-keeper, and my father, were grouped together on the sand with flaring torches in their hands. Some boatmen, a few yards from them, were preparing to set forth in search of us.

"Saved! God, I thank Thee!" cried my father, rushing forward to meet us. "My son Gilbert!" he cried with a stifled cry, as the stranger advanced with his burden, "what has happened? Man, for the love of mercy, say he is alive!"

He tore the cloak away that covered him, and gazed at the white face of his son. The dark eyes of Gilbert opened, then, meeting the sudden light of the torches, closed again.

"Here, you men," cried the late companion of my perilous adventure, "take this young fellow: I've had him long enough, in my opinion—he's no light weight."

Gilbert was transferred to the careful arms of two of the servants; another was instantly despatched for the surgeon, and slowly we ascended Freeman's Gate.

"Are you hurt, Luke?"

"Not much, father," said I meekly, and with an inward dread' as to future results accruing from this expedition.

"And Gilbert?"

"Has sprained his ankle, father."

"No more than that?" he asked sternly.

"I hope not."

My father's hand, which held the torch, shook with agitation—his whole frame trembled violently; the re-action from the past terror and excitement was coming on.

"Your children are well enough, Gilbert Elmore," said the stranger, placing a hand upon his arm; "of their deliverer you ask no questions, or give one thank to. And yet so old a friend did not build upon so cold

a welcome, even from one whose genial heart has hardened with the world's ingratitude!"

My father started, and turned to the stranger. The torch he held shed its red glare upon the features of the speaker, who stood with an extended hand and smiling face.

Good God!" said my father. "Jacques Vaudon!"

"An old friend and a true one."

Their hands met, and I could see my father press his convulsively, and ring it with an iron grip.

They had met once more. Fit meeting in the dark night, with the rugged cliff and angry sea around them, and the treacherous sand beneath their feet! Oh, night! ominous of evil, on which those disunited links of a Past, whose memory was madness, joined hands together once again.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE EVIL NIGHT COMES TO AN END.

MY father and Jacques Vaudon walked side by side towards 'The Rest.' Unobserved and unnoticed, I kept close to my father, listening to their conversation. My will was to fly to Gilbert's side, but an undefinable motive compelled me to remain with these re-united friends.

Vaudon, after recapitulating his adventure with myself, and the meeting with Gilbert, changed the conversation, by remarking—  
"I had no belief, Elmore, in Time working so great a change as I have found in you. It was mere guess-work—a chance, afterwards confirmed by your agitated manner, that made

me claim you as the brave friend of other days. You are strangely altered, indeed."

"I cannot say the same, Vaudon," said my father, with a sad smile—"the years that have intervened between us sit as lightly on you as——your cares."

"Ay," said Vaudon, in reply—"‘my cares!’ Well—why should we mourn, and grow prematurely old, over unavailing sorrow. Has not Time wrinkles enough in store for us? May I ask a question, Elmore?"

"I guess its purport. Still—ask it."

"Have you heard from her since that night?"

"Never!"—in a hollow tone.

They were speaking of my mother—my lost and almost unknown mother. I held my breath, and listened.

"I saw her three years ago, in Paris."

"Enough!" said my father, sternly—"I care not with whom, or how. There is but one fate for that false woman—the fate of all of her sex who fall. Its history can be read on myriads of faces, whose haggardness is hidden by the lying paint—yea, myriads of

myriads, swarming the streets of every great city. There is but one solace for the dishonoured man left behind—utter forgetfulness. If that becomes an impossibility—silence, deep as the grave, at least spares many a pang.”

“I understand you,” replied Vaudon. “But is not this lonely spot which you have chosen, more apt to suggest deep and painful thoughts?”

“At least, it is better than meeting faces on which you read your secret—faces, full of hidden sneers, or false sympathy, or an affected interest put on whilst you are standing by. I have come to this spot not to forget—but to rest.”

“But forgetfulness is to be found amongst the crowd—in the giddy pursuit of pleasure—in the struggle with that which interests the world; not in solitude,” said Vaudon.

“Ah! but in the whirl of those pursuits there is always a recoil—and then a deadly horror follows the false excitement you have entered into. No, no—I have chosen ‘The Rest’ on a lonely cliff, looking over a desert sea, and I am content. I have only known



entire forgetfulness once since that time which we allude to."

"And that?"

"The three months that followed my disgrace."

"How! those three months——?" began Vaudon.

"I was a raving madman!" interrupted my father; "that time was a blank, and I was happy. Had it not been for my children, my waking unto reason would not have been God's blessing—but His curse!"

"It is not every man bears his misfortune so heavily, friend Elmore," said Vaudon, "and so much the better for fair England."

We were before the gates of 'The Rest.'

"Enter, Vaudon," said my father—"not only as an old friend, but, as the deliverer of my son, you are welcome. 'Welcome!' It is the first time I have uttered that word for years."

We entered—walked slowly along the gravelled walks, with the dark shrubbery on either side, and arrived at 'The Rest.'

"Where is Gilbert?" asked my father of

Mrs. Higson, who came hurriedly down stairs to hear the full particulars of the evening's adventure.

"We are putting him to bed, Mr. Elmore," said Mrs. Higson. "He groans a good deal. How could it have happened?"

"Excuse me a moment, Vaudon," said my father. "Luke, show this gentleman to the parlour."

"Had I not better show him to a room where he can change his things, papa. He's wet."

"Wet!" cried Vaudon—"My dear youth, you are growing considerate. I should scarcely have dreamed of *that*, now. "Elmore"—to my father—"can you offer me a few clothes?—mine are at the bottom of the sea."

"Take Mr. Vaudon to my room, Luke."

Followed by Jacques Vaudon, I led the way to the bed-room of my father. It was a large apartment, with three windows, heavily hung with drapery.

"This is like a chamber in one of those

haunted castles we read so much about," observed Vaudon, as he entered; "and these windows look upon the sea."

"Yes," I said, holding the candlestick high in my hand; "how did you know that?"

"I thought your father would choose some such cheerful prospect, my young believer in murdered Frenchmen's spirits," said he, flinging his coat on a chair; "that will do. Put the light down and leave me, Master Luke."

Eager to be gone, I gladly complied with his request, and flew along the passages, and up the second flight of stairs, and into our bed-room—a spacious dormitory, containing three small bedsteads for my father's sons. It was empty. I heard voices talking in the adjoining room, and repaired thither.

It was a room occasionally used by Miss Berncastle, when a sudden change in the weather prevented her customary departure at five o'clock in the afternoon; and in that great bed, thick with snowy hangings, lay my brother Gilbert, whiter than them all.

His great black eyes were opened, and

fixed in a dreamy unconsciousness upon the figure of my father, sitting by the bedside, and holding one hand with nervous clutch. Agnes and Edward stood at a little distance from the bed, gazing on him, and Mrs. Higson and one of the maids were walking on tiptoe about the room, and whispering together concerning sundry matters connected with the domestic arrangements required.

"Why do you keep up this incessant talk?" cried my father, turning hastily to them.

"Bless my soul, Mr. Elmore!" cried Mrs. Higson, with a nervous start, "we must prepare a bit for Mr. Whittaker's coming. Jane, stand that shepherd on the mantle-shelf a little straighter, please!"

"Do nothing," cried my father,—“leave the room—it excites Gilbert.”

Mrs. Higson, after swelling to an enormous extent with silent indignation, made a signal to Jane, and left the room, followed by the aide-de-camp.

I advanced.

"Is he very ill?" I asked, in a husky

whisper,—“why does he keep so quiet and look so strange?”

“Hush!”

“But, father—tell me, is he very ill?”

“I do not know.” His eyes caught my wild and disordered appearance for the first time and he said,—“Go to your room and change your dress, wilful and wicked boy! Had it not been for you, your brother would not have been lying here.”

I knew that fearful truth too well—I needed no severe reminder of my headstrong folly to tell me that. I moved towards the door, still looking at my brother Gilbert—I went out on the dark landing and closed the door silently behind me. I walked to my room, with something choking in my throat, and stifling of my voice, and had hardly reached it, when Agnes and Edward joined me.

“I knew how it would be, Luke,” said Edward, half reproachfully, and half tauntingly,—“you’ll go to Frenchman’s Bay again, I think. Gilbert’s hurt himself very much—I’m sure of that. There’ll be no leaving ‘The Rest’ again—and all through you.”

Selfish as the speech of Edward was, I took each word as a reproof, and stood silently before the dressing-table with my hand upon it.

"It wouldn't so much have mattered if it had been you, Luke," added Agnes,—“but Gilbert was so handy, poor fellow!”

“Go away—go away,” I cried,—“I know all this—I feel all this. Go down stairs, and leave me here, alone.”

Edward, after staring with his full blue eyes, and mentally wondering at my impetuous manner, whispered Agnes to accompany him to the parlour.

“But I want Luke to tell me how it all happened,” said Agnes.

“Not now—not now, Aggy. Do go away, please.”

“Come along, Agnes, do,” cried Edward, —“you know I never can bear going down all those stairs without a light.”

They left me, and I immediately secured the door. I walked about the room—I tried to cry, to call the bitterest imprecations on my head, but my throat was too parched to utter one sound, and my eyes seemed burning into my

brain. I sat before the table, and gazed at my smeared and bloody face in the dressing-glass—I leant my head upon my arms and tried to think, but a restless inquietude pervaded me. I wanted to be walking about the house—to be running along the cliffs for help—to be going to and fro from my own room to my brother's, and learning how he felt and looked each moment. Taking off my shoes, lest their creaking sound should give warning of my presence,—I crept back to the room I had a few moments since been expelled from, and listened eagerly at the door.

All was still. The door was ajar, and I pushed it slightly inward, and peered round. My father was sitting in the old posture, by the bed-side, still clinging to the hand and gazing at the face. I ran noiselessly down-stairs, and looked through the hall-windows, along the dark vista of shrubbery, and of country beyond. There was a light at the lodge, I could see it glimmering through the trees : but no one was coming yet, and all was silent—I walked up and down the marble flags, heedless of the icy coldness that struck to me,

and then looked out again. No one was coming yet. I passed the parlour-door; it was wide open. There was a fire burning in the grate, and the stranger guest, wrapped in my father's dressing-gown, was sitting before it fast asleep, with Agnes and Edward crouching at his feet, and looking with childish interest and wonder at his pale face and black moustache and beard. Before Gilbert's room again, and standing motionless in the shadow of the door-way—an unseen and watchful sentinel of 'The Rest.' A few minutes in that attitude, and then I leant forward in a listening posture. A faint voice was speaking,—

“Where is Luke?”

It was Gilbert's voice. Changed by pain as it was, I felt relieved. I had had a vague horror of never hearing it again, and that the foreshadowing of death was hovering by him. Thank God! it was his voice, and asking for me.

“Keep still,” said my father, in a low tone; “he is in his room, my dear child.”

“Is he unhurt?”

“I believe so.”



“How did I ——”

“Don’t speak, my dear son—don’t speak,” said my father. “You are getting feverish with every word. You will keep still, to please me, will you not, Gilbert?”

“Yes.”

They were silent. I went down into the hall again, and looked into the darkness of the night. The light still burning at the lodge, but no one coming yet. Past the parlour, where the stranger sat upright now, talking to the children at his feet, and where Mrs. Higson was particularly busy in looking for nothing in a work-box, and glancing suspiciously over the lid, from time to time, at the intruder. Before my brother’s sick-room door again, and waiting patiently. Mrs. Higson came creaking up the stairs, and arrived, panting for breath, on that landing, into the remotest corner of which I had crept, to elude detection.

Tap, tap.

My father, in a whisper, asked from within—  
“Well, what now?”

“Mr. Vaudon’s compliments, and shall you be long?”

"I will rejoin him presently, and—Higson!"

"Yes, sir."

"Get Mr. Vaudon some dinner."

"Dinner, sir!"

"Yes, yes. He is fatigued. Get him something—do you hear?"

"Yes, sir."

Our hours were very unfashionable at 'The Rest,' and hence the surprise of our house-keeper at my father's order for so late a meal.

Mrs. Higson was three stairs in her descent when my father called again.

"Higson!"

"Yes, sir."

I crouched further back, as my father emerged from the room and stood in the doorway.

"Has he not come yet?"

"No, sir."

"Send off another servant—let him get a horse at the first inn. Quick!"

Mrs. Higson hastened down stairs, and my father re-entered the room and closed the door.

Five minutes more—I was half way in my

third descent, when the lodge bell rang. I ran to the staircase window looking on the drive, and gazed out. A horseman was galloping towards the house, and two servants with lanterns were flitting about the path and lighting the surgeon's way. My heart leaped again with joy. I ran back to the door of the room, and knocked.

"The surgeon is come, papa," I cried; "he will be here directly. I have seen him coming along the drive."

My father opened the door. He started when he saw me.

"What are you doing here?—Where have you been?—Why still with that stained face and torn and muddy dress? Go to your room at once."

"But, Gilbert ——"

"You shall know all directly. Whittaker takes his leave. Go now, go now!"

Before I could reply, lights shone upon the stairs, and the surgeon, a stout, middle-aged man, came slowly up them, followed by Mrs. Higson and a maid.

My father had never met the surgeon

before, but in his agitation he grasped him by the hand as if he were an old friend.

"Come, sir—come, Mr. Whittaker—tell me what is the matter with my son."

He almost dragged him into the room with his vehemence. Mrs. Higson following immediately behind, and coming suddenly upon my ghastly figure, jumped a surprising height, and fell heavily against Jane, who, totally unprepared for so sudden a retreat, slipped three stairs with a frightful howl.

My father furiously darted forth.

"A curse upon you!" cried he, savagely—"why do you women make this hideous riot before the very door? Begone! If you are wanted, you will be sent for —— I will ring."

"It's—it's Master Luke in that—that awful mess that alarmed me so dreadfully sudden, like," cried Mrs. Higson, not yet fully recovered from the effects of my appearance.

My father turned to me. His livid face, his fiery eyes, his long dark hair disarranged, his set teeth, and his clenched fists, terrified me, but I did not flinch.

"Again I say, 'Go!'" he screamed in a

suppressed voice of smothered rage. "Are you not satisfied with the devil's work you have done?"

"I will not go till I know how Gilbert is," I answered boldly; "I *must* know, or I shall die."

My father glared from me to the women on the stairs, then went back into the room.

"Stay, then."

The door closed, and was locked on the inside—Mrs. Higson and the servant maid muttering discontent, took their departure. I crept close to the door, listening to the footsteps across the room—the low voices—the sharp, quick queries of the surgeon—the faint voice of my brother in reply.

Quarter of an hour—half an hour—nearly three-quarters of an hour—then the bell rang.

Mrs. Higson came upstairs, kept back a strong desire to jump again on finding me still there, and knocked. The door was unlocked, and Mrs. Higson passed in slowly.

I crouched still closer to the door, wondering what every frequent sound and so much shuffling of feet could mean—I held my breath

and listened eagerly — I could hardly restrain myself from beating at the panels with my clenched hands, and screaming for admittance.

At last, my father and the doctor came forth together, in close consultation. In my hasty glance into the chamber I saw Mrs. Higson sitting by the bedside in the attitude of a resigned watcher.

“Why — why, who is this?” exclaimed Mr. Whittaker, starting as I sprang towards them.

“Tell me how my brother is? What is the matter with him? Is he going to die? Good God! is he going to die?” I screamed.

“Back, back!” cried my father.

“I will know, you shall tell me all,” I shrieked forth as I darted before them, and intercepted their passage down the stairs; “you shall not go down, or pass me, till I am told all that has occurred. — I am his brother—his dear brother, and I have a right to know.”

I had no fear of my father’s anger — I thought of nothing but the mysterious silence which they kept towards me, and maddened

by it, I stood arresting their progress, and with flashing eyes and heaving chest, called upon them for an explanation.

“Is this Luke?” asked Mr. Whittaker of my father.

“It is.”

“The child is very ill, excited, and wild—he is in a ——.”

“Tell me—tell me!”

My father, who appeared to have no sympathy for me, in lieu of being alarmed at my unnatural manner, lost all command of his fierce temper, and cried out:—

“If you will know all, know it. It is your right, and part and parcel of your folly. It is your inheritance of care, if you have any brotherly love for that poor sufferer lying in yon room.—He may recover health, or he may die. If God spare his life, every time that poor cripple comes before you, it will recal to you the bitterness of this evil night, making of a loved brother a living reproach, and lasting shame to you! Now, are you satisfied?”

With the last word, I dropped like a stone, senseless at their feet.

After many weeks, the fever left me prostrate and dizzy on my bed, and consciousness came back. Conscious that it was summer time, and many birds were singing in the garden, outside the window—that it was my father's face looked through the curtains at me in the early morning—that Mrs. Higson was the night-watcher at my bedside, who made such strange gurgling noises in her sleep as she lay coiled up in the arm-chair by the fire-place—that the portly man with the large diamond ring burning on his little finger, was Mr. Whittaker, the surgeon; conscious that Gilbert never came to see me, and that Agnes and Edward were led in half reluctantly, and, after a trembling look at my pale face, led out again—conscious of all this, and yet too weak to speak.

I grew stronger day by day; I murmured feebly — “Better, papa!” to my father's anxious—“How are you, Luke?” I took an interest in the doctor's coming, and sat up pillowed in the bed, and traced likenesses of Mrs. Higson, the gardener, and the Silvernots in the straggling pattern on the wall.



Stronger still, and my mind troubled about Gilbert more and more. They never spoke of him—they never mentioned to me his name, or any thing concerning him. I trembled violently, and lay sick at heart, with dread imaginings of Death having stolen in the house whilst I lay ill, and took him far away across the cliff to Wharnby's green churchyard, and set a white stone over him.

"What is the matter, Luke?" asked my father, as he detected the agitated look upon my face; "do you not feel so well?"

"I want to know about—Gilbert."

"He is getting better."

"I thank God!"

A pause; then I asked—"Where is he?"

"In his room."

"Can he get up yet?"

"Yes."

"Can he come to see me?" I asked eagerly.

"Not yet—it is better not yet."

"When can he come?"

"I cannot say—soon, soon."

"Father."

"Yes, Luke."

"How long have I been ill?"

"Ten weeks."

"So long as that!"

While I mused upon the time, passed like a distorted vision, my father, watching his opportunity, stole out of the room and left me. The sparkling light in my eyes had warned him of my increasing excitement. There was great care needed yet.

Another week, and I could sit up in my bed half the day.

I waited anxiously for Mr. Whittaker's coming, and fixed him one day with the question—

"When may my brother Gilbert come to see me?"

"Are you strong enough to see him, my dear boy?" he asked.

"Oh! yes. It would do me so much good."

"To-morrow, then. Yes, I think we will say to-morrow. You must keep very calm, and then, in a few days, you can return his visit."

"Thank you, sir."

"And in a few days after that, if you take your medicine like a man, you may go down stairs and see them all—your little brother and sister, too. You forget them!"

"Ah! true;—but I see them every day. And Gilbert may come down, too?"

"Um!—Yes."

In the evening, my father came to bid me his usual good night. I had been thinking of something all the day, and, when he entered, the question leapt to my lips—

"Is *he* here still?"

"Who, my child?"

"The man with the beard and black moustache, and thick eyebrows—like a—like a bravo."

My father smiled.

"He is here," he said; "he saved your brother's life; he is a very—very old friend."

"I thought all old friends were dead!"

"And I!—Yet——" he paused.

"When does he go away?"

"Go away?"

"Yes;—will he stop at 'The Rest' much longer?"

"I have asked him to stop ;—I have offered him the shelter of my home, Luke. He will be a companion to you—to all of us."

"Does he stop here for ever?" I asked, alarmed.

"For ever, Luke? That is a long date."

"But—but why does he stop at all?"

"Luke, do you begrudge me one friend?"

"No—no."

"This one friend, my son, was a school-fellow and a fellow collegian—till—till a certain night—our friendship had known no diminution. We were inseparables—we had the same thoughts, the same wishes and ambitions. I loved him with a brother's love."

I thought of Gilbert, and said—"Then let him stop. I am so glad—so very glad he has come."

"Do you remember the letters that came so constantly—that came so long after I had taken up my 'Rest' upon the cliff."

"Were they his?"

"They were. He was a rich man then. Since then he has speculated and been ruined.

For the love of an old time, I could not bid him go from my home friendless and penniless—this man I had known so well in better days.”

My father appeared more than usually anxious to account for the presence of Jacques Vaudon to his son. He had broken through his resolution of the utter abandonment of past friends; he had gone one step backward; he had given up the solitude of home. The gloomy, brooding look was, even in so short a time, less apparent on his face, and yet he seemed haunted as by an accusing conscience—he was so prolific of plausible excuse. I said no more about Jacques Vaudon to him—and he stooped and kissed my forehead, bidding me “Good night.”

I thought of the new addition to our home long after he had gone, and wondered what changes his coming would bring upon ‘The Rest.’ If, stretched upon my weary, weary bed, I could but have seen all the changes predestined for it, I could have closed my eyes and died, saying—“It is best for me!”

Early the following morning, Agnes and Edward came to my room.

"You are looking better now, Luke," said Edward, glancing askancely at me.

"Oh! you'll soon be better again, now," said Agnes—"and then that hateful doctor will be gone, and we shall be so happy,"—clapping her hands—"and so merry—so merry!"

"You were never of a particularly merry disposition, Aggy," I said.

"Oh! I don't know what I am—at times."

"Have you been to Wharnby House since I have been ill?"

"No," said Agnes. "I should like to see Cely again. I think I shall persuade Mr. Vaudon to let me go."

"Persuade Mr. Vaudon?"

"Yes," said Agnes; "if he were to ask papa, I think he would let me go. Papa is fond of Mr. Vaudon."

"Yes—that he is," added Edward; "they sit and talk about this and that, and 'don't you remember?' all the night."

"Do you like Mr. Vaudon?"

"Yes," said Edward—"like him! to be sure I do. He's going to teach me chess, and

draughts, and backgammon, and I don't know what !”

“ And he tells stories better than Mrs. Higson,” said Agnes — “ such pretty stories. I was frightened at his great beard, when he first came, but now I love him.”

My sister Agnes' enthusiastic admiration of Vaudon was so different from the usual phlegmatic indifference to everything and everybody round her, that I began to think I should like Jacques Vaudon myself, when I was strong enough to join them in the sitting-room, and see more of him. They gave place to Doctor Whittaker, who somewhat hesitatingly accorded his full consent that Gilbert should come in a few hours—but I must promise to be very good.

“ If you get excited, or cry, or give way to any nonsense, you'll throw yourself back—and then I shall have all my work to do again—and more, perhaps. So be a good boy, and he shall come.”

Every minute was an hour, counted by my affection for him, before he came. I had had no conception that there was so great an

amount of love in my whole being as I felt I had for Gilbert.

How I longed to see him! We had exchanged many a little verbal message the last week or two, Mrs. Higson or my father being generally the medium. "Gilbert's love to Luke," and "Luke's love to brother Gilbert," passed to and fro twenty times within the day. How would he look? Was he much altered? Was he a cripple?

Mrs. Higson was the bearer of the message, that set my heart plunging in my bosom—"Gilbert was coming!" My father had given strict orders that our meeting should be unwitnessed; and, accordingly, the housekeeper, with another warning not to be distressed about it, left me.

He was coming. I could hear a faltering step—an uncertain footfall, accompanied by an ominous sound which I guessed too well. The door opened—I sprang up in bed, and tore back the hangings. Two white faces met each other. It was Gilbert—but, oh, God! how altered!

The face, destitute of a single particle of



colour, rendering the black hair blacker by the contrast—the tall figure (he seemed to have grown, since his misfortune, several inches)—the two crutches on which he supported himself, and with which he advanced towards me with that old gentle, mournful smile—I took them all in at a glance, and stretched my arms towards him yearningly, crying out his name.

He dropped the crutches, and fell upon my neck; and we wept long and silently together, he clinging round me—a frail support to him, indeed!

“Oh, Gilbert—dear Gilbert!” I sobbed, “what a wreck I have made of you!—what a punishment and retribution is this day to me!”

He climbed upon the bed and sat beside me, his hot hand in mine.

“Dear Luke,” he said, brushing away a shower of sparkling tears from his eyes, “I am not crying because I am a cripple—I do not care for that. Why should I? We shall soon get used to it—look at it as a thing of course, and be as happy as the day is long.

Why, Luke, since my misfortune, I think you love me better."

"I should be a wretch indeed, if I did not."

"Then what have *I* to mourn for? With such a storehouse full of affection for me in your heart, I shall not grieve much over these poor crutches. Besides, I am not doomed to *two* all my life; Whittaker says, I am to have only one when I get stronger. Think of that, Luke—only one!"

"Poor Gilbert! It was the height of his ambition *now*!"

"I shall miss the long runs through the garden, and the jumps over the bushes, Luke," he said, half laughingly; "but, after all, what is it? If I had lost my sight, and could not read or see you—if I had lost an arm, and could not write, or do a thing without a valet's help, then I might grumble; but because I limp about the house, I am to tear my hair, and think my life is to be all cloudy weather—why, that would be like a baby, Luke!"

"And can you ever forgive me, brother?"

“Forgive!” with another laugh,—“there is so little to forgive, that it seems a playhouse farce to talk of such a thing. I should have been more careful—not gone running on as if I were on smooth ground, or Turkey carpet. Forgive you! yes, Luke, with all my heart and soul, I do.”

My very weakness made me cry again, as he stooped and kissed me on the cheek.

“Tears again! Cheer up. If I journey at a slower pace down the path way of life, I shall have you to help me—your kind hand to guide me. A brother’s love unites us in a bond, that no misfortune now will ever separate. God bless you, brother Luke!”

My father entering the room, an hour later in the day, found us both asleep upon the bed, the sun shining on us, as we lay with arms round each other’s neck.

\* \* \* \*

I pause. The days of childhood, and of the love naturally belonging to it, fade like snow from mountain side—and the rugged rock of manhood peers forth through the spotless covering, fast melting into water, and

vanishing into unknown depths below, from which Echo cries, like Fate,—“No more return—no more return!—The past for ever melts into the present, on the mountain side of life, whose summit points to Heaven, telling of the Future!”

In the recollections of my fevered dreams, one white-faced figure, with a tall, shrouded form, is ever prominent. From that time of sickness unto this, the calm, grave face, inflexible as an Egyptian idol's, has ever at strange times met mine. So often in my sleep, so often in my waking moments—dim, but yet palpable to me, it has stood before me like a spectre. It may have been born of fever, but it died not with it. Bred of my wild imagination, and fostered in that fever age, it glided silently into reality, and took its stand before me, defying all resistance and mental conjuration. Shunning the morning of life, and the youth of the heart, it waited for me—choosing its own time, selecting its own night, and pointing out my track. Standing now upon that mountain side, from which the snow, fair type of purity, is melting, this

Genius, or Shadow of my Life, leads silently the way, and with many backward looks and yearnings at my heart, I follow.

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

## BOOK II.



## CHAPTER I.

## THE CHANGES OF SIX YEARS.

SIX years—so interminable a time to look forward to—so short a journey, when we stand upon the Hill, and they are gone for ever—have past over ‘The Rest’ upon the cliffs, near Wharnby, and there have been changes, and lights and shades upon it, as there have been seasons of spring flowers and autumn leaves, since Luke Elmore recovered from his fever, in the beginning of one summer-time. Let me look upon ‘The Rest’ as present to me in that spring-time of my manhood, and chronicle the changes that six years have brought upon it, and those who live beneath the shelter of its roof-tree.



I am eighteen years of age—more, I am four months past, and my nineteenth birthday is within eight months' stride. I am tall for that important age, and very manly in appearance. I have a small moustache fringing my upper lip. I have wrestled in the spirit concerning that hirsute appendage ever since it exhibited signs of coming greatness. I have given way more than once or twice, and passed the razor ruthlessly across it—I have relented for a week—I have even gone a fortnight and three days, and then remorse has touched me, and the budding darkness has disappeared again—I have studied Mr. Vaudon's with admiring glance—I try to look into futurity by forestalling nature's growth, and experimentalize with burnt cork, in the early morning, before the dressing-glass—I resolve, at last ; it grows and grows, and I am a moustached young man, with incipient whiskers budding forth on either cheek. I have a very fair allowance of pocket-money ; and, needlessly to say, I wear patent boots in imitation of a young gentleman that rode away in high dudgeon from 'The Rest' some years ago, and on whom I have never

since set eyes. I inquire sometimes of Mr. Silvernot, who tells me he is finishing his education at a Parisian school of the highest polish, and is quite a man—which assertion I consider to be an uncalled-for remark of extreme significance, as implying I am not, and giving rise within myself to a difference of opinion with the worthy rector. I have a horse, and an especial groom, named Tom. I believe Tom has no other name, or if blessed with one, must have forgotten it with long disuse, for he is Tom to all the world. I have changed my tailor, and patronise a fashionable gentleman in a large town, twelve miles away, whose cut of cloth and diversity of pattern I prefer to Mrs. Higson's of old time.

I say of old time, for Mrs. Higson has departed—she was one of the first changes at 'The Rest.'

Yes, ere a year had passed since Jacques Vaudon accepted the situation of my father's secretary (secretary to what?), my father listened to that strange gentleman's proposals with singular complacency.

"What freak of fortune brought that uncultivated woman to 'The Rest,' Elmore," said Vaudon, one day.

"I answered her advertisement," said my father; "I certainly did not expect quite so crude a specimen of humanity, but she was honest, homely, and good-tempered. I was in no vein for a fashionable housekeeper—that ghost of a departed lady!"

"I would have rather had the ghost in your place," said Vaudon quietly; "if it be merely a vision of gentility, it is better than a personal embodiment of vulgarity in the shape of a shop-woman, or a fish fag."

"She will do," said my father curtly.

"Then I am content," returned Vaudon; "I have no voice in the matter. Let us to the school-room."

From that time forth my father looked with prejudiced eyes at Mrs. Higson; her clumsy movements irritated him. What a difference to the past. He was clinging to the past still!

Mrs. Higson left 'The Rest.' She had become attached to the place, and many of

its inmates had become attached to her, amongst whom I might assuredly reckon my humble self. She cried when she went away; kissed the children all round, and wished us a life's happiness as she started on the road to meet the London coach; Johnson, the lodge-keeper, wheeling a heavy pile of luggage at her heels, and regretting the future winter evenings, when let him steal to 'The Rest' as often as it pleased him, he would find no Mrs. Higson there, with a roaring fire and a good ghost story to while away the frozen nights.

Jacques Vaudon was a man of considerable talent, and had a keen eye for the weak points the foibles of his fellow-creatures: he found out a man's secret, a man's hobby, in half an hour's acquaintance with him, and won his heart through it, fascinating him like any snake charmer. Yet there was no sycophancy in Jacques Vaudon's composition: he was sharp, satirical, and very often bitter; he spared no one in his peculiar way, and yet he became a general favourite—although to all he was an enigma. There was no reading his true

character—he seemed to keep it back and live in an artificial existence as if it were his own ; with the gay and sparkling he was light and brilliantly witty—with the children of ‘The Rest’ he had a particular character for each, and won us all by a trait distinct in itself : with my father he was gloomily philosophical ; with the rector of Wharnby he was argumentative ; with the Silvernot family, quite a chatty matter-of-fact gentleman, with a little vein of acrimony, as if his temper were naturally sour, running through all his characteristic impersonations. He was the son of French parents, who had settled in England a few years before his birth ; he had been a friend of my father’s at Oxford, and a fellow-collegian, and there were many reports of the gay life he had led in the days of his youth, and the money he had squandered recklessly, and the fair hearts he had broken. Closest of friends as he had been to my father, it was frigid courtesy to the strength of the renewed intimacy between them. It seemed as if my father had concentrated all his old love for the world in the friend he had met upon the sea-shore on the evil night.

I have known and seen changes like this—men that have seemed ever hardened and incapable of diversity of action, that have gone on in one continued plodding round for a score or more of years, led at last by some master-hand, who has found the key to the buried sympathies that appeared for ever lost, and unlocks the rusty casket at his will.

It was so with Jacques Vaudon and my father; and the former's power worked greater wonders at 'The Rest,' with a few light words, than all his children on their bended knees in prayer to him could have effected. For instance, 'The Rest,' in the present—that is the present which I have with a few words summoned up—(Would I were potent magician enough to cancel all that followed, and begin the life again from the time I write of—begin it with a knowledge of the sunken rocks, the pit-falls, and the snares, and with lights across the dreary waste, as guides to the erring wanderers on the track of destiny.) behold the change! It is a change, worked by such slow degrees in the six years that have passed, that my father is hardly con-

scious of it, and dreams not that the shadow of the old time partly rests upon him as of yore. There are many servants at 'The Rest'—liveried menials flitting to and fro, bedizened in the old state of servile grandeur, as in the fatal house that looked upon the park. The carriage is no longer locked within its stable, but glossy with its paint, and glowing with its silver mountings and its emblazoned crest upon the panels. There are horses in the stalls to draw it—there are horses for us—for all but Gilbert—poor, crippled Gilbert!—and I ride with sister Agnes, looking so bright and pretty in her long habit and her golden ringlets, and so graceful, on her chestnut mare; and Tom, with the Elmore crest on every shining button, trots behind us in good style.

But it is not the old love of display that brings so splendid a scene upon the stage on which my father plays his part—it is the old pride that has come back—the pride of his wealth—of his supposed station in the world.

Neither Jacques Vaudon nor my father is a great lover of society—they are used up to

its charms, and the attractions that it had for them when they were younger men. 'The Rest' is almost as free from visitors as ever. My father occasionally rides over to Wharnby House ; but solitude has every charm for him, though that solitude is more gilded, and has lighter shadings. The change that has come should have taught its lessons, and have made him eagerly press back. With his distorted view of human nature—his want of faith in human love—it were better for him to retreat. More irritable than ever, and, combined with that irritability, an overbearing pride, that was old to him, but new to us, it mingled with the master's authority, the friend's welcome, and the father's affection, and made of him a mystery.

Agnes is quite a young woman in manners and appearance. The oldness of thought peculiar to her when a child, has ripened her into the woman at sixteen years of age. She is tall, of graceful figure, and singularly beautiful. Six years have so greatly changed her, that a stranger to her for that period might look in vain for any trait of resem-



blance in her to the little, old-fashioned, Aggy Elmore. Miss Berncastle, tottering with the weight of six more years comes still regularly, and goes through some formula of teaching, with an evident fear of her accomplished pupil, whom she treats with great respect, and to whom she gives in with a mechanical kind of helplessness to all propositions Agnes makes, and has degenerated into the toady by slow and imperceptible degrees.

It is—"Shall we have the pleasure of reading together that interesting history?" or, "Will you oblige me, Miss Elmore, with that delightful set of quadrilles you play so enchantingly?" or, "Well, how becoming that lilac satin is to your complexion, to be sure!"

Patience, Miss Berncastle! The new character you have assumed—the airs of humility you have adopted to win the pupil's heart, and remain her sage preceptor, will avail you very little. The eye of Jacques Vaudon rests upon you, and reads your policy as thoroughly as though you had printed

every word of it in Roman capitals on your wrinkled forehead.

Agnes had given promise of being somewhat pretty, but we had not anticipated her being a 'beauty' (ominous word!); and so like the mother that won my father's heart! I have said, it was a singular kind of beauty—a most striking beauty, that dazzled the first sight. The features, at the time I write, are small; if there be any imperfection, it is the slightest disproportion of her face to her commanding height; her hair is of that silvery brown—that tinge, which, catching the light, seems of a metallic lustre; her eyes are of large almond-shape, and of the brightest blue, and she has great command of them, and can make them speak any language; the nose and mouth are Venus's own—and yet, with each feature perfect, and the entire face as lovely a one as I have ever seen, there is an indescribable expression on it. It is attractive—but what is it? It is more apparent at one time than another; it is now a faint outline, very dim and indistinct—then it is strongly marked, and lines the features till they wholly

change ; it comes across her when she sits in reverie, and stronger still when anything opposes her or thwarts her—and then, mingled with a defiant look, it blazes forth ; it is something unallied to calmness—something in which the soul speaks not ; it is deep as the sea that bounds the garden of ‘The Rest’—it is full of calculation. Women that have risen to power, or have been very famous, or ambitious, or great intriguers, or meddlers in politics and treason, or wholly bad, like Faustina and Messalina, of the City of Dead Rome—all must have had a look like unto this. Women, who have gone out of their sphere, and thought with their head instead of heart, must have had my sister’s strange expression on their countenances when they were young, and have had it deepened on them as they progressed on in life.

I dwell too much upon this look. I was not observer enough to think much about it at the time—the look was only dawning on the face ! To the Present — this false Present, that my wandering pen swerves from so often —I again attempt the picturing.

My brother Edward is more of the child than any of us, and somewhat of a capricious child, too. He has still a resemblance to his twin sister, and not alone in feature. There is a tolerable amount of selfishness in brother Ned, and he is a little envious at my sudden start away from him in the race to manhood. He thinks of shaving every day, and makes satirical jests upon my hairy lip, without success. He endeavours, with strenuous effort, to keep up with me: he has banished jackets from his sight, and walks about, extremely ill at ease, in frock coat and stand-up collar. He is somewhat of a tyrant to the domestics at 'The Rest;' and I have heard his name commingled with muttered complaints in the servants' hall, more than once or twice. Edward and I have our matters of dispute—and they occur very frequently, and are not got over in a hurry, owing to an attribute peculiar to Edward Elmore. There is a sulkiness about my brother Edward, that has often vexed my father equally with the other members of the family—a proneness to dwell upon a fancied slight received, and to maintain a rigid silence

for hours, or days, or weeks, according to the extent of his imagined injury. Not even his father can influence him when subjected to these brooding fits of sullenness—and so we have given him up incurable; and, as they affect us little, we take little heed accordingly.

And Gilbert. I have left him to the last that I might speak of him at greater length, and more at ease, before I resume the thread of my biography. He is not so tall as he gave promise for, his injury has put a check upon his growth, and he is a good two inches beneath his brother Luke in height — but how more manly-looking!

The features are calm, placid, and commanding; the eyes full of thought; the forehead, lofty and broad; the lips firm and seldom parted; the hair long and thick, and giving an appearance of heaviness to his bold head that a second look soon cancels. He has one crutch, and walks remarkably quickly and hardly ungracefully with it—he is a deep reader and an earnest student, and there is not a book in the great library of ‘The Rest’ he

has not pondered over. He is very reserved in his manner to strangers, but his misfortune has not depressed his spirits or made him a despondent youth by any means. There are few heartier laughs at 'The Rest,' when there is anything worth laughing at, than his. And the affection between us, though never spoken of since the day he paid me a visit to my sick couch, is very deep and true, and is never lessened by an angry word. We have never quarrelled, our tastes or wishes when they jarred have accomodated one another's, we have tried to forestal each other's wishes — we are truly brothers. If he feel a pang of regret, a secret inward pain when he sees me return to 'The Rest,' flushed by horse exercise and full of recitals of friends I have met, or minor adventures, I have encountered, he hides it so well beneath his open smile and genial look that I know nothing of it. The story of the Frenchman's Bay, is a dead topic between us we never speak of it or make comment concerning it; it is remarked upon by my father and others to him and me, but between ourselves we hold it sacred. My father's words

ring ever in my ears : “ It is your inheritance of care, if you have any brotherly love for that poor sufferer lying in yon room.”

If I have any brotherly love ! as if my love for him were to be doubted or made light of, that brother of my heart !

My father spoke of the lasting reproach Gilbert would ever be to me, a reproach unto myself every time he came before me ; but true prophecy as it was, the reproach is in my own breast ; there is nothing but affection in his generous welcome of my coming, though I come fifty times a day.

What a great heart he has ! What a love for the father he had been so considerate of, and so fondly attached to, as a boy. It does not waste — it increases and commands respect and reverence. I do not know if he like or dislike Jacques Vaudon—he evades the question, and speaks little of him to me. They converse together a great deal, and argue strenuously, one on each side the fire, and perhaps there is a half attachment between them. Vaudon who has a greater flow of language, and has seen more of the world, generally comes off victorious

in argument, at which Gilbert shakes his head and laughs, saying : " Wait a while—I shall recollect the subject and pose you some fine day." And sure enough, when the topic has been entirely forgotten, Gilbert, who has slowly built up his facts and taken counsel with himself, returns suddenly to the charge, and confounds him utterly with a fresh series of ideas. Gilbert writes a great deal, too, but we know not on what subject, as the papers are carefully secured in a cabinet he has had fitted up in a pretty study on the ground floor, with a window opening on the garden, and he refuses, jestingly, to state the purport for which he labours on so perseveringly.

I am a second favourite with the members of the household, Gilbert, undoubtedly, being the first—there is nothing can be done well enough, or quickly enough amongst the servants, for Mr. Gilbert Elmore ; he is so gentle, so kind-spoken, and so quiet,—a dear young man indeed, they say.

I do not know what he would be if fairly roused, but gentle and quiet as he is, I believe there are latent energies which would battle



against any obstacle, if they were called into being for a purpose. There is no craven look in him—no lamb-like resignation to a wrong, I feel assured, about him—there is power written in his face—power and an honest pride.

(I write as I thought at the time—whether future events will bear me out, time will show.)

Even Edward never sulks with Gilbert, but then Gilbert readily gives in to all his whims, and puts aside any task to help him, at a moment's notice ; and Agnes' capriciousness stops short at my brother's study-door : his look disarms them, and his unselfish nature completes the conquest. But this is the youth of the children of Elmore—what is to come ? what is to come ?

The Silvernots are our only visiting friends—the rector, more impulsive than ever, is continually calling at odd times, and sits chuckling over the surprise his sudden appearance has created for several minutes after his arrival ; he is very chatty, very communicative, and when any great argument occurs, and he and my father join in with Vaudon and Gilbert, the noise is absolutely terrific. He looks very

old; the six years that have passed, score twelve with him, but his heart is younger than ever. He regrets we are all running up so terribly fast, and that he shall have no excuse to play and romp any more.

“And as for you, Miss Agnes,” he says, with his odd, good-tempered smirk, “it must be ‘my dear Miss’ soon, or plain ‘Miss Elmore,’ you have grown such a young lady. All alike—all alike! *Thère’s* little Cely at the Minerva House, Hammersmith, grown like a May-pole, and is coming home for good. Why, let me see, how long is it, Luke, since you have seen Cely?”

I don’t like his picking me out from all the family, it looks suspicious; I redden and reply,

“Two years.”

“Two years! Why, how is that? Oh! I recollect, the last holidays—(holidays once a year, that is all—capital plan!) were spent at a relative’s—true. Well, she *has* altered. As much as—as Agnes here. So tall! ’pon my honour, when I called upon her three months back, I hardly liked to kiss her—she seemed somebody else.”

"Time is a tyrant only to the old, Mr. Silvernot," says Vaudon, as he looks round from a reverie, at the open window, (it is summer time) "the young find him a friend, that adds a fresh grace every day."

"Ay, but he turns traitor after thirty. Fickle as Dame Fortune," says Mr. Silvernot.

"Time *must* be a lady, I think then," adds Vaudon, his hand dallying with moustache and beard, a constant habit of his when engaged in conversation, "and a lady of *uncertain* age. Volatile, and full of whims, with some especial favourite in train, why Time must be a woman—eh, Agnes?"

"No; Time is of the rough mould in which you men are fashioned," says Agnes; "Time is too severe and resolute for us."

"Leave the subject for another day," observes my father from his seat. "It is a difficult one. So Celia has improved, Mr. Silvernot?"

"Well, I really think she has," says the rector; "she is quite a young woman. Bless my soul! how girls melt to womanhood in one imperceptible stage!—and how the boy strug-

gles and flounders between his satchel and his first razor!"

Edward, taking the rector's observation as a personal allusion, leaves the room immediately.

"I used to consider you, Luke, as Cely's little sweetheart," says Mr. Silvernot; "but, ha! ha! she'll frighten you—she will, indeed! In fact," says he, in a lower tone of voice to my father, but which is not inaudible to me, "there's a fast young scamp, whose father's in the Treasury, sneaking about the exterior of the school, who's touched in the heart—or"—correcting himself—"in the head, and" very sternly—"I'll have none of that nonsense."

I have a lively remembrance of the pretty, fresh face of Celia Silvernot, and admire the rector's principle accordingly. I wonder he did not call on the father in the Treasury, and point out to him the flagrant conduct of his offspring; and I wonder more at what he means by Cely frightening me—frightening, indeed!

So, the summer-time is green and young—

‘The Rest’ is brightening a little from the gloom—its children are shaking childhood from their backs and marching onward—and Cely Silvernot is coming home for good !

## CHAPTER II.

## A MORNING CALL.

THE successor to worthy old Mrs. Higson had not yet been determined upon, and the shadow of her presence, like many shadows of her legendary histories, hovered about well-known passages, and came stealing up the stairs after sunset, and lurked in the darkest corners of 'The Rest.'

My father had resorted to the newspapers, and had answered several advertisements he had seen therein; but the replies were not satisfactory, and Jacques Vaudon read, or feigned to read, the characters of the writers with the skill of any modern chirologist; and the result arrived at was far from compli-

mentary to the ladies out of place. Vaudon appeared to have my father's interest and that of his children greatly at heart, he studied our wants and our pursuits so much. If he had a motive for every new suggestion, I am at a loss to what to attribute it. Here and there I can fathom one, but some were too deep, or had no meaning.

Miss Berncastle progressed on in her sage policy, and, winning favour in her young mistress's eyes, took extra importance upon herself for the same, and became quite majestic, and, when in good humour (which was not always), condescending and sublimely gracious.

First favourite with Agnes Elmore, what was there to fear? If Agnes were pleased, the family must be of course. Why, even Mr. Jacques Vaudon, who so courteously and invariably raised his hat from his head when he met her coming towards the house from Wharnby, and smiled so heavenly, was full of the praises of her management!

One morning, the Elmore family were seated at the breakfast-table, Agnes Elmore presiding.

"Papa," said that young lady, as she

handed him his large cup of chocolate (his favourite morning beverage), "I am going to make a request, and I want you to promise me something."

"I shall have no difficulty in acceding to it, I dare say, Aggy," said my father, dubiously.

"But will you promise?" with a winning smile, which my father could not withstand.

"Well, well. Yes."

"I wish I could manage father in that cool style," said Edward, bluntly; "you must let me into the trick, Ag."

"Don't call me 'Ag.,' if you please," said my sister, with freezing dignity; "any one would think you were speaking of a witch—especially,"—with a sharp twinkle of her bright eyes—"as the 'h' drops in unconsciously, my little ploughboy."

Edward, with a stifled grunt, looked daggers, and swallowed half a roll.

"Now, the promise, Aggy," said I. "What can it be, I wonder? A new bonnet or a book of the fashions—the last number—I'll wager."

"More serious—more serious than that,"



said Gilbert. "Agnes advances too cautiously for so slight a matter."

"Not so slight a matter!" cried Vandon; "a new bonnet is an affair of great importance to the daughters of Eve: there are colours to choose, complexion to suit—as much study as they use in Parliament to pass a reform-bill; and a book of fashions, it is priceless! It is a pity that, like the ladies it is written for, it is so continually on the change."

Agnes, with no heed to the three last speakers, said—"I have been thinking, papa, that as my studies have nearly reached a conclusion, Miss Berncastle, a lady I greatly esteem, should not be ungratefully set aside upon their termination."

"I have never purposed so *ungrateful* an expedient," my father remarked, curtly.

"Therefore, I should like you to instal Miss Berncastle as housekeeper in Mrs. Higson's place. Miss B. is more of a lady—naturally so—and is not averse—I am sure she will not be averse—to accepting the same. I am very much attached to Miss Berncastle."

"If Miss Berncastle consider ——"

"One moment, Elmore," said Vaudon, placing his hand quickly on my father's arm. "This would be a rash promise to fulfil."

"My father never breaks a promise, Mr. Vaudon," said Agnes, with an imperious look.

"Nor would I have him, Miss Elmore," was the respectful reply of Vaudon; "but the subject interests us all, and should not hastily be concluded."

"What have you to say against it, Mr. Vaudon?" asked Agnes; "let us hear the objections you can urge, sir."

Vaudon stroked his beard, and commenced.

"I will place a few statements before you all. I will leave it to you all to reflect upon. I do not pronounce them law," he added, as he caught sight of a peculiar smile on Agnes' face, "neither have I a right, nor hold a place to do, so."

My father, very little interested, sipped his chocolate, and half listened and half thought of other matters.

"In the first place, Agnes Elmore, your studies have *not* reached a conclusion: Miss Berncastle may be a learned lady, but she is

one of an old school, and goes an old-fashioned way to work. You have learned all that she can teach, but is it enough to bestow upon you that easy grace and calmness characteristic of the high-born?—has she even given you tact enough to steer your way through a crowded ball-room or a brilliant party?"

"A crowded ball-room or a brilliant party! Good God! Jacques Vaudon, have you gone mad?" cried my father, leaping up from his leathern chair in his amazement.

My sister's face wore the strange look upon it I have before spoken of, mingling with a flash of pleasure at some suggested picture of the future. Jacques Vaudon, catching the expression, smiled, and then turned to my father.

"I exaggerate and alarm," said he; "your pardon, Elmore—supposing even parties and balls set aside."

"As they will be," stiffly said my father.

"As in all probability they will be," continued Vaudon, "yet in the meeting of even our Wharnby friends on social evenings—for I am prophet enough to foretel we shall have more of them than we have ever had—"

"Why?" interrupted my father once more.

"I am coming to it, Elmore," said Vaudon, impatiently; "give me breath enough to speak, and room enough to breathe, if you have a Christian spirit in you! Let me see—where was I bewildered last?"

"In social evenings," reminded Edward.

"Yet in the meeting of our Wharnby friends on social evenings, as I said before," continued Vaudon, "you will carry your crude manner—or Miss Berncastle's manner—into the room with you. It will be seen less on you than on others of the same teaching, perhaps; but still it will be plain enough, Miss Agnes. You would not have disparaging inferences drawn, Mr. Elmore," said he turning to him, "between your daughter and the fascinating Miss Silvernot, brilliant with London polish? You have more pride."

"He would be a bold man who hazarded the remark in my presence," said my father.

"Still it will be hazarded," said Vaudon coolly, "and you cannot enter the lists and run a tilt with fat old dowagers, and bony spinsters of many years standing—can you,

*mon brave?* No; but this you can do. Get an accomplished governess, one who has mixed in first-class society herself, and a week will work great wonders. Let that same lady, if she be willing, enter upon the house-keeping management of 'The Rest.' I take it there is no one deeply indebted to Miss Berncastle—she has been paid well enough for the duties she has performed; and she is but a country governess, after all."

"We will think of this more," said my father, "another time;—what say you, Aggy?"

"Another time, then, papa," said Agnes, very thoughtful; "the promise was a rash one—the thought that suggested it, but ill-considered, at the best. Yes, we will think of it—we will think of it."

And before the week passed, the father and daughter had arrived at the same conclusion. The father's pride, that Agnes, *his* daughter, should stand a mark for comment even to the Silvernots, and a foil, to enhance the good breeding of the young lady so shortly expected home, revolted within him, and

asserted its suremacy. And Agnes, calculating, perhaps, on one step leading to another, looked forward to many a fête at Wharnby House, and even many a ball. It was true that there was still a great objection—she could not dance. But her father had changed his mind in many things of late, and she would wait patiently for the turning of events.

Miss Berncastle had held a long conference with my father in the library, and had been apprised of the intended change. Miss Berncastle had gone through a series of complicated manœuvres with a pocket-handkerchief and a bottle of smelling-salts, and sobbed, and choked, and sniffed, and gave little guttural sentences between whiles, which she invariably left half finished in her mental anguish and emotion. Miss Berncastle had been treated with great gentleness, and had received a gold watch from my father's hands, as a token of respect, which she kissed spasmodically as she retired, backing with great gravity out of the room, and curtseying to the ground in reverence.

A few more days were to complete Miss Berncastle's dominion at 'The Rest,' when the answers to my father's advertisement in a London paper, came pouring in at Wharnby's diminutive post-office, at which place all applications were directed to be addressed.

Tom, laden with 'the missives, came into the room.

Gilbert and Edward were walking in the garden, Agnes and Miss Berncastle doing nothing in the music-room, and I sat reading at the window alone.

"Here be the letters from the post-office," said Tom, dropping a leathern bag with a bang upon the table; "may I be bold enough to ask Mr. Luke what they *air* all about?"

Tom was of an inquisitive turn' of mind, and, as I had favoured him of late, he had become quite a familiar gentleman.

"Nothing particular," said I; "you can go."

"Oh!"

Tom reluctantly withdrew, and my father shortly after entered the room.

"Has Tom been to the post-office to inquire for letters, Luke?" asked he.

I pointed to the bag of letters on the table.

My father seated himself, and poured out the contents of the bag before him.

"What a sad reflection, Luke," he said, pointing to them, "that to three or four lines, almost lost amongst a mass of print, should come some hundreds—ay, hundreds—of urgent applications: women of talent—women who have known better days—women struggling for an honest living. Now, out of this mass I can choose but one—but save one from the stern thoughts poverty may bring. And which one, from all these epistles—some of which have been prayed over—some written with a heaviness of heart akin to despair—some, unconscious of the crowd of rivals, full of hope and confidence—is it to be?"

He spread the letters over the table with his hand, and gazed mournfully at them.

"The first post has arrived, I see," said the deep voice of Vaudon, as he entered; "by my faith, a goodly muster!"

"I was thinking, Vaudon," said my father, looking up, "of the many broken hearts these



letters are a type of. I would wager a goodly sum, that every one of these notes could tell a sad story."

"Sad enough!" replied Vaudon; "but there are plenty of missives here, not written by those to whom your advertisement was addressed. For instance," snatching two or three up in his hand, "here are Mrs. Higson's class—the heavy, illiterate old ladies who can hardly spell their own names."

"And there are many representatives of Miss Berncastle amongst them, or I am much mistaken." I remarked.

"Representatives of all classes upon earth," said Vaudon, flinging the red-wafered epistles he had snatched up to their places again; "a few fitting for the office—the greater number ignorant as asses. Now, which epistle strikes the eye amongst the number here collected?"

I went to the table, and looked observantly at the chaos of letters. There was one letter sealed with black, which particularly attracted me; the address was evidently written in haste, but it was written gracefully, and contrasted with the more studious efforts that surrounded it.

My father leant forward and took it up from the rest.

"The very one that struck me!" I exclaimed.

"The very one I should have chosen last," said Vaudon — "a black seal, ominous of death. Some gloomy maiden, cold as an icicle, without doubt."

"The envelope is not black bordered; the loss is a minor one, or has not recently occurred," said my father; "and Death may have taught a lesson that she can teach again."

"A lesson!" I exclaimed.

"The lesson that the world is not to be worshipped like the heaven that shines over it," said my father, in a hollow tone of voice.

"Does Agnes Elmore require telling that wise truth?" asked Vaudon.

"It is never out of place to teach it, Vaudon," he answered. "We may all learn it with good grace."

"But the letter?"

My father broke the seal, and, after reading the contents in silence, passed it to Vaudon.

"Humph!" mused Jacques, with his hand almost buried in his flowing beard; "there may be something in it, after all. It is, at least, worth some attention."

"I like this letter for two reasons," said my father; "in the first place, she has been a governess in a high family—in the second, she is not a lady who has ranked high once, and so there is little room for airs of vanished greatness; she has no pretension to be anything more than the daughter of a late lieutenant in the navy. Her letter has no assumption about it, yet it tells of an accomplished woman."

"She mentions no age," mused Vaudon—"she may be as old-fashioned as Miss Berncastle. Yet,"—looking at the letter closely—"the handwriting is too firm for a nervous dame over thirty. Suppose you take care of Miss Osborne's letter, Elmore, for the time."

"I will do so," replied my father. "Now, Luke, help us to open some of these letters. If you come to anything worthy of note, let me know."

Before I had broken the first seal, there

bounced into the room, with the freedom of an old friend, the little rector of Wharnby.

"Ha! ha!" he cried, shaking hands with all of us—"taken you by surprise—I thought I should. I've walked—that is, run—all the way. Couldn't wait for my horse being saddled to bring you such news! Impulse was not to be resisted."

"Good news, I trust?" said my father.

"Why, that's as it may turn out in the end—eh, Mr. Vaudon?" said the good-tempered clergyman.

"True, Mr. Silvernot," replied he—"‘news’ is a better word. He is a bold man, who makes a statement, and calls it ‘good news.’ In a year, he may curse the hour he ever learnt the tidings."

"True — true enough," murmured my father.

"A man may consider the news ‘good’ that conveys to him the offer of a marriage from a rich man to his daughter," continued Vaudon, who was evidently in a ruminative mood—"but a few hours can make a change to the contrary, rather startling. If you accept Miss

Osborne, she will account it the luckiest of news, whereas it may be the harbinger of ill-fortune—the pioneer of distress.”

“Accept Miss Osborne!” cried the rector—“who is Miss Osborne? Why, why—you’re never going to marry again, Mr. Elmore?”

“Marry!”—with a half groan—“no—not marry.”

“My father has advertised for a governess,” said I, in explanation.

“Indeed!”

“A finishing governess,” added Vandon—“neither a Miss Berncastle nor a Miss Wigginton.”

Miss Wigginton—by the way—was still a resident beneath the roof of Wharnby House, acting as companion to Mrs. and Miss Silvernot.

“Ha! ha! Miss Wigginton!” repeated Mr. Silvernot. “I suppose not. In fact, I proposed Cely’s change from Wharnby to Minerva Academy, Hammersmith, solely on account of Miss Wigginton. This is in confidence, you understand. Not that I dislike Miss Wigginton — merely Miss Wigginton’s

teaching. And so Miss Berncastle is going?"

"Yes."

"And if I may ask the question, Mr. Elmore, who is Miss Osborne?"

"A lady who has offered to become the resident governess at 'The Rest?'"

"But why not send Miss Agnes to a London school,—or, in my opinion a better course still, a Parisian academy?" asked Mr. Silvernot.

"Too much society—too many faces—too much gossip and wild romantic fancy, Mr. Silvernot."

"Well, it may be so," said he; "but my news—good gracious, they'll be here before me! How very silly I am, to be sure!"

"Who will be here?" ejaculated my father, with more vehemence than was, perhaps, consistent with politeness.

"Why, my sister Cely, to be sure."

"Cely Silvernot!" I exclaimed, with all the vehemence that had characterised my my father's manner.

"To be sure," said the bustling rector, rubbing his hands—"she's coming with her

sister Arabella, and my respected father—you'll never know her—you'll never know her!"

In the rector's delight at his sister's return, he had imagined that all the inmates of 'The Rest' would be imbued with the same feelings of exhilaration, and now looked wistfully at the grave, unmoved features of my father.

"I shall be happy to welcome her at 'The Rest,'" said the head of the house; "she was quite a child when I saw her last."

"Oh! quite," said he; "and now—but, Lord bless me! you'll never know her—you will not, indeed."

He seated himself at the table, jumped up again, and ran across the room, took his hat off the chair, and put it on his head, snatched it off again with a hasty apology, and then launched into a full account of every incident in Celia's life, from the day of her birth, with a face glowing with fraternal pride.

Watching my opportunity I slipped from the room, and ran up stairs three steps at a time.

"Hollo! Luke!" cried Edward, meeting

me on the first landing—"where are you going—what's the matter? Gilbert's been asking for you—we've just come out of the garden. Some one's been at the peaches since yesterday—I'll swear they have."

"Nothing's the matter," I said, confusedly,—"that is, nothing worth mentioning. When I say not mentioning—I mean—upon my soul, Ned, I don't know what I mean."

"And upon *my* soul, I think you're about right," said he, amazed.

"Tell Gilbert I'll be with him in a minute or two," I rattled on, "and, oh! I forgot to tell you, Ned, the Silvernotts are coming."

"What of it?"

"Nothing," I answered, "except Celia,—you remember Cely—is coming with them. She's home from boarding-school."

"What of it?" for the second time.

"I thought you'd like to see her—that's all," I stammered.

"Oh! I shall see her often enough," was the callous answer,—“but who could have taken those peaches?—my favourite tree, too!"



Disgusted with such a base indifference to the Silvernots, I passed my unfeeling brother, and entered the room.

There were separate rooms for the children of Elmore now—the little cribs were all gone, and we each slept in stately loneliness.

I hardly knew what motive had brought me to my dressing-room save a desire to shine and appear manly in the eyes of Celia Silvernot, who had grown so much of a woman since we last met. Remembering her but as a child, I could have no other reason, and yet I was as agitated and perplexed in choice of dress, as if I had been in love. Did I want to make an impression on Celia Silvernot? Really, I could not answer. I wanted to look well, that was my only satisfactory excuse—a vain one enough, perhaps, but I was contented with it.

Before I was half ready to descend, I heard the grating wheels of a chaise along the drive, and the door open, and voices in the hall.

I had been perplexed in a choice of waist-coats; had been vacillating between a snowy white and a black embroidered, when the

arrival of Celia led me to dash at the former, and, after a few minor arrangements of hair and moustache, to dart from the room. My hand ready to open the parlour door, when the fearful thought of appearing in a white waistcoat of attractive spotlessness in the early morning, entirely unmanned me. I flew back again, like a madman, exchanged my costume with the rapidity of any harlequin, gave another brush to my hair, with which I was exceedingly displeased—half-a-dozen attractive wavy curls over the forehead, which had been there for years, having entirely disappeared—and descended.

I met Gilbert at the bottom of the stairs.

“What, Luke! I should hardly have known you,” with a smile. “Are you going anywhere?”

“No, no,” I replied, with an effort to be cool, although I felt assured I was considerably redder than a fire-engine; “but I had on an old morning-coat, and it was hardly respectful enough—was it now?”

“I will tell you when I’ve seen the coat, Luke,” said he, with an odd, comical look. “How soon you wear your clothes out, to be sure!”

Gilbert had a capital memory : my morning coat had only been brought home last week.

We entered. God forgive me ! but it was a foolish vanity—a refined selfishness—that made me draw myself up to my full height, and walk with a proud step, as if to afford a contrast to the lesser stature and limping gait of my poor brother. The Silvernots were there. Mr. Silvernot, senior, was talking to my father in a very voluble manner, with two fingers inserted in his button-hole ; Vaudon was leaning over Miss Arabella's chair, and quite gallant in his attentions ; the rector was contemplating the scene, all smiles ; a sylph-like creature, not quite so tall as Agnes, was by Agnes' side, at the open window, looking on the garden. Edward, very much out of place, and looking vacantly abstracted, sat biting his nails in a sheepish kind of manner.

I heard the roll-roll of Mr. Silvernot's "How d'ye do, my dear boys ?" the "Good morning, sirs," of stately Arabella. I had an undefined impression on me of feeling their hands in mine ; and then I was lost in

the blaze of effulgence beaming from the prettiest of pink silk bonnets.

“What, Mr. Gilbert! Mr. Luke! I am very glad to see you, after so many years of separation.”

It was such a tiny hand, encased in light brown kid, extended to me; there were such myriads of black ringlets on either side her face; her eyes were so bright and sparkling; her cheeks of such a roseate blushing tint; she was very, very pretty, and I was—yes, the rector was quite right, after all — very, very frightened.

Gilbert was perfectly at home, and not in the least embarrassed or awe-struck. Whilst I was stuttering through my expressions of pleasure at our meeting, he said, so coolly too :—

“I am very glad to see you at ‘The Rest.’ Now there is to be no more going back to London; may Wharnby House and this retreat be almost one.”

Not so bad, Gilbert! I wish I could have said that, and been rewarded with so sweet a smile for the expression.

"What a change there is in everybody," said Celia with a merry laugh. "Mamma said I should find you all very much altered, and she was right, indeed. Why, Mr. Luke, time has worked wonders with you."

"Yes, Ce — I beg pardon, Miss, what did you say?"

"Time has worked wonders with you," she repeated.

"Yes, Miss," was my sapient reply, made with cheeks of a vivid scarlet.

"Miss!" she echoed; "I used to be Cely once, Luke, when we were playfellows, and you used to run over to Wharnby House on Wednesday afternoons with Agnes or Edward. If we have grown older, are we to grow frigidly courteous and become so particularly formal? You speak as if you had never seen Celia Silvernot before."

"I can hardly believe it is the same little girl that used to race me across the lawn three years ago," I said, plucking up more confidence; "I am doubtful, even now."

I drew a chair between her and my sister, and Gilbert leant across the back of

it, and completed a group of which Celia was the centre ornament.

So we chatted of old times, those childhood's days so dear to every memory, and drew pictures of the pursuits and whims that had interested us, and that, in the recalling of, made us again old friends and dear companions.

I could not help contrasting Celia Silvernot with my sister Agnes, as they sat together. They were a great contrast to each other, both beautiful in their particular style. Celia's dark hair and eyes were so opposite to Agnes' light-brown locks and large blue searching orbs; their complexions were both of a brilliant white and red, but there was an air of frankness in Celia's face that was more than ordinarily apparent after looking at my sister—Agnes was a beauty of a more patrician order, of a more wavering expression—perhaps to strangers, of a more attractive potency—features more regular and classical (I have often traced resemblance more or less faint, in the marble heads of famous heathen goddesses to Agnes), but there was the whole heart in

her friend's face — one could read it like a book.

How the time had flown! Why they were going, and apologising for their long stay, when it appeared to me to be scarcely but a minute since the chaise came winding round the drive.

"And now no more of your snail-like practices, Mr. Elmore," said the bustling rector; "no keeping in your own shell. One large happy family—eh! my dear sir—eh!"

"If you will promise me a quiet day at Wharnby House, and keep your friends for other occasions more important, I will call and see you now and then," said my father.

"That's a bargain, sir," said the senior member of the Silvernot family; "I rely upon that promise, sir—I rely upon that promise. Well, well—when is to be? Run over this evening, all of you. Suppose we say this evening, Mr. Vaudon. I trust in you to help me."

"I will use my best endeavours, Mr. Silvernot," said Vaudon, in reply.

My father did not relish anything half so

precipitate, and, firmly declining so early an invitation, he promised that a week should see him, God willing, at Wharnby House.

I took a long walk in the park appertaining to 'The Rest,' after the chaise had rolled away, and borne a fairy face away with it. I was clean gone—shot neatly through the heart. I had almost expected it. First sight had never worked so sure a result in matters of love as this first meeting, after two years' absence.

So beautiful—so accomplished—was there hope?

I would keep my passion such a secret in my own breast; I would hide it deep beneath the superficial manners of society; I would strive to win her; I would slowly and by degrees gain that love, without which my boy's heart said happiness could never be. We should be much together. There were no such aids to love as constant companionship and kindred pursuits—I knew that for true philosophy. And by and by, I thought, as I walked on at a pace as



rapid as the emotion in my breast, when my close intimacy would warrant me to tell her how I loved her, and how long that love had nurtured every aspiration of my soul, I should win her timid "yes," and, like the sequel to the fairy tales, live happy ever afterwards.

Dream on, Luke Elmore, your happiest times will ever be your dreams—your fairest hopes will bloom and die in rosy visions. Dream on, Luke Elmore of 'The Rest!'

## CHAPTER III.

## SYMPTOMS OF MANY THINGS.

I FOUND many excuses to my family for visits at Wharnby House. I began to fraternize with the warm-hearted rector, in his pretty villa, near the church, and called many times thereat; more especially when I made the important discovery that Celia was very fond of riding thither also—sometimes to disarrange his papers, sometimes to listen with patient gravity to his last concocted sermon.

I detected in Celia Silvernot a love for flowers, too; and, although perfectly aware of the immense green and hot-houses in the Wharnby grounds, made choice bouquets from my own flower-beds, and presented them with

trembling reverence. I became particularly studious of my personal adornment, and ran up extensive bills with my tailor at Cliverton ; and astonished my father, beyond all measure, with the elaborate costumes of the period.

I reached to a pitch of excellence in the cultivation of the moustache, and became absorbed in the study of whiskers, and made deep experiments on my own straggling tufts, so unworthy of the usual cognomen bestowed upon them. I discovered I had a taste for poetry, too—and copied many lackadaisical effusions from the ‘Poet’s Corner’ of our county paper ; and attempted, more than once, to compose odes and sonnets of a fiery nature and extreme significance — but universally failed in lines deserving of the glorious subject I had chosen.

That was a happy time, too, when we all rode over to Wharnby House, one summer evening, and made our promised visit. I do not know what occurred, or what topics were discussed, or anything—save that our family was there, and Jacques Vandon there, and all the Silvernots, and Celia. I know all con-

cerning Celia—how very pretty she looked in white, with a red rose in her hair—how angelically she sang—what a merry, ringing laugh she had—what a lady-like grace in everything she did—what happiness was in her beaming looks—what a heart without a care, *then*—what a suffocating kind of pleasure I felt about the region of the chest—what a hoarse voice I had every time I spoke to her—what a love un-akin to a boy's, in my boy's heart!

Yes, I believe—nay, I know—that mine was not a child's first fantasy—the day-dream of an affection that shrivels up before the burning heat of a true passion; no—it was deep and pure, and there was not a selfish thought alloyed with it. The solitude of 'The Rest' had kept me from the world; I had been brought up differently from other boys, and I was a young man, at eighteen, very different from other men. I had learned love from the books of my father's library—I had been imbued with something of their romantic nature. I looked upon the passion as something holy, and felt within my glowing breast a gratitude to God for it.

And the picturings of my imagination ! The golden future, when we were married, and had some charming villa near my father's house, and passed a life away without a cloud.

I returned home that night wrapt in ecstasy. Vandon and I rode on horseback a few yards before the carriage that contained my father, his daughter, his eldest and his youngest son ; and Vandon endeavoured to draw me from the dream-land into which my thoughts had plunged, failing, and looked with penetrating gaze at me from the corners of his eyes.

I remember it was a bright moonlight night, and the dark firs and full-leaved elms of 'The Rest' could be seen—a black mass near the edge of the cliff—from the moment we left Wharnby House. I remember the rippling, shining sea on our left hand, and one distant ship, with full-spread sails—a silver spot—on the murmuring waters.

Vandon roused me, at last, with a home question—"What do you think, Luke, of Celia Silvernot?"

"I—I think she is very pretty," I replied, with burning cheeks.

Feeling conscious that his eyes were on me, I turned my head and looked towards the sea.

"She will be a fine young woman," mused Vaudon—"quite a star in the family; for"—with a short laugh—"the other Silvernot constellations sparkle not very brilliantly in contrast."

We trotted briskly home.

"Why, faith, Luke!" cried Vaudon, "I verily believe you have not come from the house at Wharnby, heart proof."

I ventured to indulge in the weakest of ironical laughs.

"There would be nothing very remarkable in Luke Elmore marrying Celia Silvernot!" he exclaimed; "it is natural enough, if you make haste."

"Make haste! Mr. Vaudon."

"Haste, of course," said he. "When I was a young man, I always struck whilst the iron was hot. 'More haste, worse speed,' is not a wise truth in matters of love."

"I should have thought your example contradictory to that precept," I remarked, "for you are still a single man."

"True," with a peculiar expression flitting over his face; "I may have had reasons for remaining blessed in my singleness. Take my advice, and make haste, my young lover."

"I have never owned to the influence of the blind god's passion, Mr. Vaudon," said I, somewhat vexed at the transparent manner in which my young secret had been hidden; "you misapply clever counsel."

"Then, it will do for the time that will come one day," said he, lightly; "you have the recipe. Profit by it, Luke, whenever occasion serves."

"Why do you recommend such haste?" I asked, with some curiosity.

"Because, where a beauty is concerned, or an heiress, or, in fact, any girl one may be deeply interested in," said Vaudon, "it is as well to make sure by a speedy proposal. The very suddenness of the onslaught takes by surprise, and then capitulation follows. If you vacillate, and hang back, and wait for opportunities, in lieu of making them, a fresh actor steps in, a more accomplished rival intercepts your progress, and, with a few compliments,

half-a-dozen sighs, and three or four whisperings in the ear, walks gaily off with the prize you have dallied with so long, and leaves you a fine prospect of blue sky with no sun in it—a dead blank, Luke—a dead blank!”

“What, a blank with moon and stars?” I asked, laughingly, as I followed up his simile.

“The moon may be a second love, a false light borrowed from the first, and the stars are weak and frail, and sometimes—fall from Heaven.”

“True.” I was thinking of my mother.

“No happiness in moon or stars. But,” suddenly said Vaudon, “men are often ignorant of the sunrise. First-loves are very often comets, blazing past, and dazzling the eye. Woe to the man who pursues them for his sun!”

“Woe indeed!”—still thinking of my mother.

“So there’s my advice;” said he, “find a store-house for it in your memory.”

“It is advice that will do me little good,” I replied; “I may believe in comets. Give me a touch-stone to detect the truth.”



"There you puzzle me," cried Vaudon; "the truth is beyond 'plummet's sound.' Watch for it. I can advise no better—some men are blind all their lives."

He left me to my reverie after that statement, and waited for the carriage to come up with him, and rode by its side, talking to its inmates, the remainder of the journey. I had soon forgotten all the philosophy of Vaudon, and was thinking of Cely in white muslin, with a red rose in her hair.

Agnes was very dull all the ride home, and very silent and meditative on the following morning, so much so that my father asked if she were ill.

"No, I am well enough," she answered, peevishly; "but where is the new governess, that is to make a lady of me? To make me sing those Italian and German songs of Celia's, and not the odious Scotch airs and maudlin ballads, a century old at least. To give me something to talk about—of new books, new music, new fashions—to talk about France, and to give me the true French accent—why Miss Berncastle gabbles it like

Irish!—and Mr. Vaudon studiously keeps it to himself.”

“You would be a fashionable lady?”

Agnes looked penetratingly at him.

“Why, hardly fashionable,” said she, evasively, “but still not a female ‘Robinson Crusoe.’ Oh! how I would learn!” she cried, excitedly—“how I would learn!”

When my father left the room, which he did with an agitated face, she said, passionately,—“Oh! Luke, what a hideous guy I am, compared with Celia Silvernot. We are both of the same age, too. She knows so much of the world, has such high-bred manners, such a fashionable air—and I, who could do all these things better, more gracefully, more winningly, am as ignorant as our gardener’s red-faced daughter, Kitty.”

She breathed quick and short—I stared with wonder.

“And she will go to the Cliverton Balls, and the Yeomanry Balls, and the parties given by all those great neighbours we shut ourselves away from, and keep our doors closed to,” she cried, her white hands clenching.

“and I, Agnes Elmore, must stick here like a hermit in a cell, and hear of her at third-hand, and see her name in that *Cliverton Herald* day after day, and have her praises ringing in my ears eternally.”

“Do you think she will be so fond of all these pleasures?” I asked, rather alarmed.

“Fond of them!” she answered. “Who would not be? Why, there’s a grand ball coming off in two or three months, at the Town Hall, Cliverton—a ball given by the officers of the —— Regiment, quartered there, and she is already thinking of her dress; and only my age, Luke—but sixteen!—a few months past sixteen!”

“Is she going alone?” with a look of intense horror.

“Alone, you simpleton?” she said, with a compassionate glance, expressive of her pity for my helpless ignorance; “she is going with all the family, except the rector, and with a host of friends. All Wharnby is going, save those who should be head of Wharnby—the dead-and-alive Elmores.”

“But we are not children, now: father is

less stern and less exacting—he does not treat us like, children, Aggy. We may go. I believe we have but to ask.”

“Ask, and see,” said she, with a scornful laugh; “and even gain his consent—gain it, if it be possible—and then stalk about the room to be sneered at and commented upon. Fancy me being asked to dance a quadrille, and stammering out, ‘I do not dance.’ Sixteen, at the Cliverton Ball, and don’t dance!” She unconsciously snatched a handful of flowers from a vase, and strewed them about the carpet in her vehemence. “Why, Luke, what are we but one degree above the savages?”

My father re-entered with a sealed letter.

“Luke, if you intend to ride to-day, I will entrust you with this letter; if not, I will send it by one of the servants.”

“I am going out directly.”

He gave me the letter. I glanced at the address, and read—

“MISS OSBORNE,

“Merner’s Library,

“Knightsbridge.”

In the left-hand corner of the letter my father had written 'Immediate,' and underlined it with a thick black stroke.

He smiled grimly as he detected my eyes resting on the word, and said—

"It is a pressing case! I have delayed and delayed—for what reason, it is difficult to say. I have decided now. God send, Agnes, she may be *fashionable* enough for you!"

Agnes flushed scarlet, but said nothing.

"I shall not want you, Tom," I said to my groom, as he stood holding my horse at the door; "I am merely off to the post-office. We'll drop ceremony, Tom, for once."

"Very well, sir," with a downcast look.

The truth was, that, since I had become a victim to the tender passion, I had imbibed a preference for riding alone—the clatter of the horse of my attendant in the rear disturbing my meditations—not to mention the attendant himself, who was very partial to a little conversation, and rode closer at my heels than necessary, for that ostensible purpose.

So I rode to Wharnby village alone, and harassed myself about the great Cliverton Ball, and the coming parties, and the society in which Celia was to mingle and be made so much of. I had thought to have her all to myself, it seemed. I should have rivals, probably. I must make haste and profit by the counsel of Jacques Vaudon.

As I passed through the village, there were two old women—one in a red cloak and peaked-hat, like a witch—talking together very attentively in the middle of the road, and a curly-headed boy was playing with a dog, and gambolling round them.

“Grandmother!” he cried, as I advanced, “come out of the road—here’s one of the Elmores from ‘The Rest.’”

“So that’s a young Mr. Elmore, is it!” said the red-cloaked witch, shading her eyes with a brown, wrinkled hand, and looking full at me as I rode by; “well, he’s a handsome young fellow, anyhow—eh!—Mrs. Clover?”

I did not hear Mrs. Clover’s corroborative testimony, but I rode on with a pleasurable feeling, notwithstanding. She was an old

woman, and, perhaps, blind as age could make her; but I still felt flattered at the compliment, and fancied myself more of a match for the rivals that might be advancing in the distance, to snatch away all hope of Celia Silvernot.

Having deposited the missive intended for Miss Osborne's hands in the Wharnby post-office, I turned my horse's head, and trotted homewards.

About half way in my return route, when a clatter of horses' hoofs sounded in the distance, and a minute more saw two ladies and a gentleman, well mounted, galloping towards me.

My quick eye detected the graceful figure of Celia Silvernot, the object of my thoughts, her sister Arabella, and the rector.

I had not seen her on horseback, and there was fresh subject for secret admiration as I reined in my mare to greet them.

"Not knocked up from last night's dissipation, Mr. Luke?" inquired the rector; "I feared for you—I did, indeed."

"I might have felt a trifle dizzy when I awoke, but I have ridden off all effects."

"Been to Wharnby village, Mr. Elmore?" inquired Miss Silvernot, who looked somewhat gaunt on horseback, and terribly sharp about the nose and lips.

"Yes, Miss Arabella," I replied; "a special call at the post-office."

"I suppose we return," suggested Mr. Silvernot, junior. "Shall we keep this young scapegrace company, eh, Cely?"

"I am agreeable,"—with a bright glance at me.

"Right about; wheel!"

They turned their horses' heads in my direction, and we all cantered off together.

By a lucky incident, perhaps by design of the warm-hearted rector, who was a shrewd man at times, I rode on a little in advance of him and Arabella, and by Celia's side.

"How your sister Agnes has improved, Mr. Luke," she observed, after three minutes' silence, during which I had been nearly bursting every vein in my head in search of a subject to converse upon.

"She has altered, I think."

"Wonderfully."



Another horrid pause, and we cantered on at a rapid pace.

"When shall we see you at 'The Rest,' Miss Celia?"

"In a day or two, papa will call; I heard him say this morning that he intended shortly paying you a visit."

"And not you!"

I said it much too earnestly, for she coloured as red as the scarlet tie round her pretty white neck, and seemed embarrassed.

"I shall come and see Agnes soon," she said at last.

What a terrible bore it was that I could not dash into talk—although it were commonplace talk—with Celia Silvernot!

The third silence between us. How annoying to be sure!

"Do you remember Master Redwin?" she suddenly asked.

"To be sure I do," I replied; "is he coming home?"

"Mrs. Redwin came over in her chaise yesterday morning to say he was shortly expected at Wharnby. She was very proud of her grandson, if you remember."

"Has he altered, I wonder?"

"Really, 'tis so long a time since he came to Wharnby House, that I remember him but as a pretty boy, with a great taste, or vanity, in dress."

I felt somewhat relieved by the knowledge that she had not seen him lately.

We talked of Paul Redwin, and of Agnes, and of 'The Rest,' and even the great Cliverton Ball, which, with diplomatic skill, I managed to bring the subject round to.

How that ball perplexed me!

"Are you fond of dancing, Celia?"

"Oh, yes! I am very fond of dancing—are you?"

"No—that is, yes—if I knew how to dance."

"Not dance!"

Her dark eyes opened to their fullest extent, and she suppressed a comical little smile from extending over her face, by pursing her red lips closely together.

"But I may know all your elaborate figures before the ball comes on. If so, may I engage you for the first dance?"

"I am very much obliged," with a bow.

"And you consent?"

"Can I do less, to so gallant a proposal?"  
And you intend to emerge from 'The Rest,'  
and go to the Cliverton Ball?"

"Oh, yes!"

I could not help being surprised at my own cool determination; but I had settled it all in my mind, and had no doubt of satisfactorily arranging everything. What could I not arrange, with the prospect of Celia for my first partner? With my companion, it seemed more of a jest, and there were one or two merry laughs over it, before I reached the road that bore round to my home on the cliff.

"I shall say no more about it, Miss Celia," I said, as we stood in a group, exchanging salutations; "but it is a promise of which I will remind you."

"Very well."

"What—what is it?" cried the rector, in his bustling manner; "a concerted scheme of elopement, or what?"

I was red—horribly red, again. Why had

I not Celia's self command?—and why was I not capable of so quiet a smile?

Ah! but then I was in love, and Celia——? I hoped—I believed; but I was ignorant, and all was dark, and all impenetrable.

Yes, I hoped and believed; and I rode to 'The Rest' happy in my hopes!

## CHAPTER IV.

## PROGRESS.

THE change that had dawned upon our home during those years which I have but cursorily glanced at, was not without its prototype, in the fisherman village of Wharnby itself — a village destined for a greater transformation than ever came upon 'The Rest.'

Some royal personage, a great duke or a grand prince, thoroughly wearied with hard travelling, had stopped at Wharnby for the night instead of posting onwards at full speed to Cliverton, and had risen early in the day and sniffed the sea breeze from the cliffs with his royal nostrils, and being in good humour with himself and the world on that

particular morning, had declared his excessive astonishment that Wharnby was not a fashionable watering-place, and his regret that no pier or harbour marked the spot and made it picturesque, or convenient for shipping, or even handy for the fishermen and dredgers. Royal words never fall unheeded; they alight on good ground, and take root and flourish vigorously, and these formed no exception to the rule. Wharnby began to look about itself from that time—Wharnby was remembered by many fashionable families, and immortalised in records of fashionable news, as the resting place of this peer of royal blood.—A Wharnby genius built a large hotel, and advertised in London papers—a gas company started business in Wharnby—visitors began to arrive—two bathing machines made their appearance on the sands in the summer and the autumn months—buildings were rising right and left—and a subscription for a harbour was set on foot, and a fair amount speedily raised, owing to the five hundred pounds heading the list, the donation of the royal personage before alluded to, who from that moment bitterly

nothing so absorbing, so never wearying in reflection, so half grotesque in its extravagance, and yet so painful in its very minuteness, as the bright dream-world which most of us pass through, and date from thence many of our purest recollections.

My love was the more romantic for the trifles that it had to feed upon—the lightest words and smiles—the sitting by her side—the accidental contact with her hand against my own—the casual, unthinking glance—all kept me thoughtful and reserved, and very, very happy.

I made no progress—I was not contented, perhaps, with standing still—a watchful sentinel by the fire burning in my heart, but the outposts were secured, and there were no enemies advancing from the mists of the distant valleys, that my vigilant eye could detect or challenge. I preferred to wait. I had no moral courage to act otherwise; I had built my castle in the air, and peopled it with fairy faces, and in my belief, it had so long been fostered, that I could think it nothing but the strongest fabric, whose foundation was dug

deep, and proof against all storm and tempest.

I had no occupation to wean me from my thoughts of her—it was part of my father's pride to keep us aloof from men, and from mingling with the world; he was rich enough to leave to each of his children a fair independence, and he loved us round him, and had a deep love for us beneath the cold, invariable manner with which he iced over his better self. Each hour was Celia's—I was ever studying love-speeches that I never said, and love tokens that I never had the courage to make manifest—I dreamed of her at night—I started from my sleep with her name upon my lips.

Mrs. Silvernot, with a maternal eye upon me, received me with the sweetest and crispest of welcomes, and was skilful in arranging my place at Celia's side, and was full of praises in my hearing of the budding graces of her younger daughter, and evidently intended to be down upon me presently, when symptoms set in more violently, and we gave surer sign of an affection in the bloom of youth.



Mrs. Silvernot was an estimable lady, but she had an interest in seeing her daughters off her hands, and had tried hard in other days to transfer the care of Arabella to some worthy man, capable of appreciating the merits of so rare a prize, but had signally failed in the attempt, and at one eventful period had precipitated a promising flirtation, between her elder daughter and a weak-minded young man, studying for the church, and who had come to Wharnby to go through a course of reading with her son, preliminary to setting out for Cambridge; and had so startled him by a sudden onslaught of 'intentions,' that with an embarrassed air, and stuttering speech, he had backed out of the room, packed up his portmanteau, and flown away for life, leaving Arabella a monument of blank despair.

But there was a slight difference between Celia and Arabella—one was very beautiful, and the other—— Well, peace to the past, Miss Silvernot — the days have long since gone, the night has long since deepened on me, and shut thee from my sight !

There was one scheme to be set about

directly, and made haste with—I must learn to dance. Unless I hovered and glided mechanically about, veering gracefully right and left on the tips of my patent boots, to the seraphic harmony of a full band, at the Great Cliverton Ball, I should be undone for ever.

How to make the first step? There were no dancing academies at Wharnby; and Cliverton, supposing it to possess that valuable desideratum to promising young men, was twelve miles from 'The Rest.' Then, there was a stern father to consult. I had been brought up under such careful surveillance, and taught to lay all my puny schemes and childish propositions before my father for consideration and final judgment, that the thought of keeping secret from him any plan I might form, struck me with a sharp pang as of remorse. Yet that thought crept into my brain, and grew stronger and stronger with every day, and became fixed at last into resolve.

I could not bear the chance of a refusal, and I knew my stubborn nature too well to believe that it would give way to my father's wish—backed, as my inclinations were, by the

love for Celia Silvernot. Consequently, I reasoned, that keeping secret my intentions would be better for all parties—that it would spare my father much pain and mental distress, and Agnes much jealous envy. So I would learn dancing, and no one should know of my acquired accomplishment—and I would go alone and in secret to the Great Cliverton Ball.

And afterwards?

Let the future take care for itself—the ball was where all thoughts halted; I could not look beyond that event—it was the great era in my life.

It was my first secret, and I felt a keen sense of humiliation in my father's presence. I felt I had betrayed the trust reposed in me—that I had begun to think and act for myself, uncaring for the feelings of the one to whom I owed my birth, my education, my station in the world. I was a moral coward, and feared to face dispute, and perhaps entreaty. I preferred the tortuous path. I made the first step from right when I rode away to Cliverton, one sunny morning, full of my new project.

Cliverton was a large town, with three churches, a dissenting chapel, a small theatre, an assembly-room, a large market-place, a town-hall, and an ornamental pump, by way of public edifices. The railway was stretching out, Briareus-like, another arm in this direction—(railways were giving promise of what they have since become, and shares therein were high and flourishing)—and the bricklayers were busy erecting a station in the grandest Gothic; and the horses that started from the ‘Black Bull,’ with the ‘Pegasus’ coach, every morning, weather permitting, looked as depressed in spirits, with the shadow of coming events cast on them, as did their masters, guards, and coachmen.

After putting my horse up at the ‘Black Bull’ aforesaid, I strolled through the town in search of a dancing academy. I looked in vain at every glazed card in the shop-windows, at every brass plate on street-doors, and, at last, felt inclined to give up the wild intention, having a dread idea that there were no professors of the saltatory art in Cliverton, and that I was a doomed young man for life.

I walked to the railway-station, and gazed with an apathetic manner at its large proportions. I went further into the country, and hung over half-finished cuttings, watching the navigators at work below. I looked at the pump and the market-place, and took a vast interest in a dirty old woman opening oysters, in a left-handed manner, for a knock-kneed plasterer, and finally strayed into my tailor's, and gave an immediate order for a white satin waistcoat to Mr. Stippins, who smiled significantly as he took my measure, evidently labouring under the impression that it was a wedding garment.

Whilst Mr. Stippins was encircling me with his yard measure, a bright idea suggested itself to me.

"So you are going to have a ball here, Stippins?"

"Yes, sir," he replied; "always once a-year. Grand ball, sir. Given by the officers, sir."

"How do you obtain tickets?"

"Why, sir, they can be got, but it's difficult, sir."

"Oh! could you manage it for me, Stippins?"

"For you, Mr. Elmore?"

"Yes, for me."

"Why, I'll try sir. You see, sir, the officers send tickets to all the gentry round about Cliverton, and—oh! I have it, sir—its plain enough—very plain."

"Then I may rely upon you, Stippins?"

"Why, sir, it has just struck me that if you wrote a letter to Colonel Stalker or Captain Clifford, they would be most happy to forward you a ticket. Very courteous gentlemen, the military, sir!"

"Are they?"

"To the heads of the county, sir," remarked Stippins, very drily.

"Thank you for the hint, Stippins, and"—coming round to the principal object I had in view—"the rising generation of Cliverton, the *beaux* and *belles* of future balls.—I suppose they have some celebrated artist to prepare them for their *début*?"

Oh, yes, sir, there is Bentboys."

"Bentboys' is ——"

"Professor of dancing, sir."

My heart felt quite light again.

"Does he reside at Cliverton?"

"Opposite the Assembly-room, sir. Large music shop—glass chandelier—little man with red nose."

Five minutes more, and I was looking intently into the music shop, and admiring the chandelier suspended from its roof, and on the watch for a small man with a rubicund landmark, by which I might steer the way to an introduction.

After half-an-hour's stupendous efforts to overcome my natural timidity, I shut my eyes, and plunged into the shop, as if it were a cold water bath and I a nervous patient.

I was soon at my ease. Bentboys was just the man for me. Bentboys would undertake to initiate me into all terpsichorean mysteries in less than two months, by a series of private lessons. Bentboys, eager to secure a new pupil, undertook to commence immediately, and several steps were analyzed and gone into, in a spacious room over the shop, before I quitted the house.

It was all arranged. I had begun to learn

dancing, and 'The Rest' seemed frowning upon me a reproach, when I rode home that afternoon.

I let no one into the secret; I kept it as closely within my breast as that greater one which linked me to Wharnby House and those within it. I rode over to Cliverton three or four times a-week, and practised dancing with Miss Bentboys—a very small lady, in a constant state of lisp—and got on amazingly.

I wrote to Colonel Stalker, and received an immediate reply, and an enclosed ticket for the ball. Colonel Stalker would be most happy and highly honoured, and the pleasure of my society would—upon his own showing—entirely overwhelm him with delight, etc., etc.

I learnt afterwards that Colonel Stalker was an ardent lover of field sports, and a crack sportsman into the bargain, and had often cast longing eyes at the dark shrubberies of our estate, as he rode by on September mornings.

My correspondents were very few and far between, and this epistle might have been



detected as an extraordinary and important one, had not the Cliverton post-mark boldly stood out in relief. I had trusted to it, and it did not fail me.

"Another tailor's bill!" said my father, tossing it to me. "Are you going to open shop?"

His quick eye had for once deceived him, and the griffin and stars, with the Latin motto on the seal, he had mistaken for a lion and unicorn, and 'Stippin and Co., Tailors.'

They were pleasant rides to Cliverton, and there was something worth looking at, and worth sauntering an hour away in an inspection of Cliverton shop-windows.

I had not cared for shop-gazing before I was in love; indeed, I had had a decided distaste for that particular—but how the boy-god had changed all my inclinations! Every shop suggested thoughts of Celia—that is, every shop that appealed to the imagination.

I stood admiring the jewellers' windows, and picturing the ruby brooch on Celia's neck, and the emerald bracelet on Celia's arms, and the diamond hoops on Celia's fin-

gers. I bought more than one trinket for her, which I set aside in a little drawer, biding my own time.

Then there was the bookseller's; and I used to wonder which book she would select—which of the last fashionable works she would like to read: and I bought two or three sets of them also, and took them to Wharnby House, and lent them to—Mrs. Silvernot!

And every bonnet in the large milliner's shop with the plate-glass windows, I fancied Celia's pretty face within, and have stood realizing it, till the apprentices' heads in the back parlour have kept up an incessant bobbing over the blind, evidently impressed with the idea of my being desperately in love with one of them, or of having some felonious intention in my mind, only requiring time to be carried out with satisfaction to myself.

And the linen-draper's at the corner of the street, and all the music-shops, and the piano-forte maker's from London, and that immense furniture warehouse, so suggestive of keeping house and home with Celia, all had their attractions, and weaved an ideal life around me.

I had my portrait taken on ivory, too, for seven guineas, by a German artist, with a stormy head of hair, and gave six sittings for it, and bought a gold locket of *that* jeweller's, and had my likeness set therein, and then laid it along with the trinkets in the drawer, that were biding their own time.

What a picture I drew of the day when I could give her my likeness, and she could take the miniature and prize it as something above all worth, and we should be engaged, and such a happy couple!—ah! such a happy couple!

So, waiting for that day, I lived in hope and built my plans; and tower after tower, turret after turret, rose on my castle in the air—as fair a fabric as ever dream-land raised, or poets mused o'er in their haunted brains.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE NEW GOVERNESS.

MEANWHILE Miss Osborne had replied to my father's letter, and my father had written again, and a second reply had determined the matter, for all preliminaries had been arranged, and the day had been settled on which Miss Osborne was to come.

"Miss Osborne informs me in her last note," said my father, one morning, "that she will be at Cliverton to-morrow, and will take the coach to Wharnby on the following day. I have not answered her letter, but shall send the carriage."

"Your courtesy to the fair sex reminds me of old times, Elmore," said Vaudon; "it is

almost an unnecessary attention to a governess or housekeeper."

"I do not like the idea of my daughter's preceptress arriving by a public conveyance," remarked my father, with a proud air.

"Humph," mused Vaudon; then, after a pause, he asked abruptly, "what does Miss Osborne want at Cliverton? Why not have come straight to Wharnby?"

"Ever suspicious, Jacques," said my father, with a half smile; "may not Miss Osborne have a relation or an old friend to meet?"

"Or a lover, Elmore?" then, in a lower tone, "and that would be a bad beginning for a quiet life at 'The Rest.'"

"Miss Osborne's lover must keep ever in the background, then," said my father; then, turning to me, he asked—"Luke, do you mind going to Cliverton the day after to-morrow?"

Having an engagement already at Bent-boys', I did not mind at all.

"And Agnes?"

"I should like to be the first to welcome Miss Osborne," replied my sister.

"Then, Agnes can take the carriage, and

bring back the lady. She will probably be at the coach-office about three or four in the afternoon. Luke, you will go on horseback, I suppose?"

"Yes, I think I will."

"But how am I to know Miss Osborne?" inquired Agnes.

"I very much doubt the probability of a second lady travelling to Wharnby by coach from Cliverton, at this season of the year."

"You forget Wharnby is becoming a trifle more fashionable, Elmore," said Vaudon.

"Fashionable!" sneered my father; "none but fools will ever set the fashion at Wharnby."

The day arrived, and early in the afternoon Agnes took her seat in the carriage, and I rode by the side in my usual dreamy state of half-consciousness—half-conscious that this was Wharnby, and I was riding from it to meet Miss Osborne—but with an entire knowledge of my desperate condition in matters of love, and of the bright face that lit up Wharnby House with radiance, and dazzled and blinded all the poor mental faculties I fancied I might possess. There was half an hour to spare at Cliverton,

and Agnes wanted to make some purchases at the aspiring linendraper's, near the market; so, whilst she was being bowed into the shop by the master of the establishment, all smiles and white neckcloth, I rode round to Bentboys', and was soon deep in the mysteries of waltzing.

I was getting on in waltzing rapidly—I had passed the unwieldy kind of spin which characterises beginners in the art—I no longer crippled Miss Bentboys for the remainder of the day by coming with elephantine precision on her dirty satin-clad toes—I really could waltz; and Bentboys himself, who played his kit like a Paganini, would launch forth into rapturous expressions at my proficiency, as I whirled round the room with my lisping partner.

Being a youth of strong imagination, I tried to picture the room over the shop as the ball-room opposite, Mr. Bentboys as the full band, and his accomplished daughter as Celia Silvernot—but signally failed in the latter impersonation; for Celia had not red hair and a pink nose and did not lisp, neither was she afflicted

with convulsive sniffs at uncertain intervals, as most undoubtedly was Miss Bentboys the Small of Cliverton. So, giving up these abortive attempts to forestal the happy night, I took everything in a literal sense, and progressed on at a rapid pace, and looked triumphantly through the windows at the dark room opposite, with its chandeliers in holland bags, and its windows very dirty, and its whole appearance unaccountably oppressive, like the ghost of a ball-room that was never more to see life—that had been eternally laid to sleep in its great yawning grave.

But it only looked so—I knew better. I knew that the time was coming when charwomen would be flitting in and out at side-doors (not the state entrance with the enormous lamp over the wide stone portals), and men would be cleaning the window-panes, and there would be noises of moving forms and music stands within, and carpenters with paper hats and mouths full of nails would be appearing and disappearing fifty times within the hour, and packages would be arriving, and chandeliers would be unswathed,



and taught to glitter in the day-light, and signs of that eventful night would be seen within, without, at Bentboys music rooms, at the Barracks on the high-road—where those kind officers were quartered, at every shop in Cliverton, on the faces of the dirty boys who lived in the choked-up streets, at the back of the market, and which faces would be packed together round the doors, to see the company go in that night, not many weeks away.

Agnes had not completed her purchases, when I emerged stealthily from Bentboys', and mounted my horse. The coachman was asleep on his box, the horses were baking in the sun, and much concerned about the flies, and through the glass-doors of Messrs. Trimmer and Co., I could see Agnes very busy amongst lace and satin.

I rode round the town, and met the carriage on the move as I returned.

"Luke," said Agnes, from the window, as I rode close beside it,—“do you see anything of Miss Osborne?”

We were at the coach-office, which formed part of the Black Bull—the coach had not

arrived, but there were ostlers and porters hanging about the place, in expectation of it.

I looked up and down the street. No one bearing the slightest resemblance to Miss Osborne was to be seen, and I made known the result of my observation to my sister.

"Where can she be?" cried Agnes, impatiently; "how I abhor waiting about, and everybody staring so,"—and she drew down the blind of the carriage window nearest the office, with a sharp jerk.

There was a large private house a few doors distant, with a brass plate on the door, and another on the gate, and a page leaning over the latter was evidently looking for something also, in an earnest manner—for he kept attracting my sudden attention by stretching his body so far across the spikes, in his eagerness for a long range, as to threaten a fall into the street, or a frightful impalement on the spot.

Whilst fearfully interested in the gymnastic performances of that remarkable boy, I caught a glimpse of the coach in the distance, advancing at a brisk pace towards us. The page,

who had evidently been on the watch for the same object, darted into the house.

At a sign from me, our coachman drew the carriage to the opposite side, and the London stage came rattling up to the office at the same time as the door of the private house before alluded to opened, and a young lady emerged therefrom and descended the steps. An old white-headed gentleman, without a hat, stood at the door, smiling his adieux.

"That must be Miss Osborne—look, Aggy," I exclaimed, pointing in the direction of the house.

Agnes looked out.

"I do not know—I can hardly think it—and yet she is in slight mourning—see."

"It is she, I feel assured," said I, riding towards her.

I reached the house, and leaped off my horse.

"Miss Osborne, I presume."

The lady stopped and looked full at me.

She was pale and delicate-looking, with large brown eyes, of a thoughtful cast, which gave a gentle and winning expression to a countenance not otherwise particularly

beautiful, although placid and intelligent. She was not tall, hardly reaching, perhaps, to the middle height of woman, but of graceful figure, and very slightly made.

"Yes, sir, I am Miss Osborne."

She waited quietly for my explanation.

"My name is Elmore, miss," I said; "my sister and your new pupil has come from 'The Rest' to meet you."

"I am indebted to your sister for so kind an attention, Mr. Elmore," she replied, with a smile; "pray let me offer her my acknowledgments forthwith."

The carriage drew up beside the pavement, and the footman having been dispensed with for so long a journey, I officiated in his place for the nonce, and turned the handle of the door.

"I intended to go by coach," she said, half reluctantly; "Miss Elmore is very kind."

Miss Elmore herself responded to the compliment as Miss Osborne entered the carriage, and, dispensing with an introduction which I was formally about to make, with lady-like grace she welcomed her governess and set her at her ease.

Agnes was chatting very busily as we rode off to Wharnby, and Miss Osborne was listening attentively, and smiling occasionally, and evidently studying the new pupil by her side.

They were both mistaken in each other—Miss Osborne had looked forward to a girl some years Agnes' junior, and had found a young woman, gracious, perhaps a little condescending, and yet with very winning manners, and apparently requiring no tuition that she was capable of bestowing; and Agnes had expected to see a staid lady, of some thirty years or so, and had been agreeably surprised to find Miss Osborne evidently not more than twenty years of age, who made no pretension of her learning, and no assumption of her delegated authority, but was more of a friend and a companion, and one whom she was sure she could love and be very happy with.

I had my doubts on that point, but I kept them, to myself as I rode on a few yards in advance, and pictured my father's astonishment at the appearance of the new aide-de-camp to the household of 'The Rest.' I

fancied I could detect on the gentle features of Miss Osborne a calm firmness, that would resist any attempt to undermine her sense of duty or of her position, which would not agree with Agnes Elmore. Agnes would strive for the mastery—would strive to be pupil, and yet mistress—and I doubted the result. Whether my doubts were ever confirmed, future chapters will bear evidence. Vaudon, my father, and his two sons were awaiting us, and their glances were all directed to Miss Osborne, as she entered the room with Agnes.

My father started somewhat at the appearance of Miss Osborne. Vaudon, possessed of more self-command, bowed, and almost unconsciously rose from his seat. Gilbert and Edward slightly acknowledged the presence of the lady.

“I have pleasure in welcoming you to ‘The Rest,’” said my father, advancing—“but—you are very young.”

“You anticipated——” she began.

“Your pardon, Miss Osborne—but suffer me to interrupt,” cried my father, quickly.

“Age matters very little in the case of my

daughter—it is the qualification for the task you have undertaken that is alone necessary, or that I have care for. I believe I shall not be disappointed.”

Miss Osborne bowed.

“You are aware that my letters entered into full particulars, and spoke of your assuming the duties of housekeeper, upon the completion of my daughter’s education. I must say again, you are very young for a housekeeper.”

“Mr. Elmore is a lover of the antique, Miss Osborne,” broke in Vandon, half satirically; “and yet ‘it is not the age; but the qualification, &c.,’ as my friend has ably observed.”

“I hardly venture to assert, that the duties of housekeeper are suitable for me, Mr. Elmore,” remarked Miss Osborne; “but I aim not at position; and, though a governess be a more ambitious title, I have not found such happiness with it as to cling tenaciously to the name. I am young, sir—and, more, I am alone and friendless.”

“I grieve to hear it, Miss Osborne,” replied my father—“it is a sad as well as a

frank confession. Alone and friendless ! Well, well—there are more alone and friendless in the world than yourself, although they may be stately persons, and fare sumptuously every day, like Dives of the parable. One can believe in friends, and yet be friendless—live in the crowd, and yet be a great solitary.”

“ Besides,” said Agnes, full of her new governess, “ shall I not soon be a young woman ? and then, although Miss Osborne be housekeeper, I can arrange many little things for her, and superintend everything, like a true lady of the house.”

“ And head of ‘ The Rest,’ ” said Gilbert, quietly ; “ but your ladyship forgets Miss Osborne is a traveller, and has not dined.”

“ Let me correct your last assertion, sir,” said Miss Osborne—“ I dined at Cliverton.”

“ I have prepared Miss Osborne’s room,” said Agnes—“ it adjoins my own. If she will favour me by accompanying me thither, I am quite ready.”

“ Thank you, I will do so willingly, Miss Elmore.”

The two young women glided out of the



room, and my father and Vaudon looked significantly in each others' face.

"Well?" said Vaudon.

"Well?" echoed my father.

"She will do, I think. There are no airs of the *parvenu* about her. For the daughter of a naval officer, she has a surprisingly aristocratic air with her."

"I wish she had been ten years older," murmured my father.

"Why?"

"She would have had more influence over Agnes; her superiority of years would have enabled her to assert more command."

"Pooh!" cried Vaudon; "she will be more of a friend, and Agnes will imperceptibly catch her tone and manner. What think you, lads?"

Gilbert and I expressed it as our opinion that Miss Osborne would be a valuable addition to 'The Rest,' and Edward, who had not the slightest interest in the subject, said nothing, and continued the book he was perusing.

Agnes returned to the room alone.

"Miss Osborne begs to be excused returning to the room this evening. Her travelling from London, during the last two days, has greatly fatigued her."

"She appears of a delicate constitution," said Gilbert.

"Poor girl!" mused my father, "friendless and alone—friendless and alone."

We dined without Miss Osborne, (our dinner-hour had changed from the old-fashioned hour, 'one,' again, and 'six' was the appointed time) and during the evening, the boxes of Miss Osborne, which had gone on by the coach to Wharnby, were brought up to the house.

Agnes retired immediately after dinner, and went to spend the evening with her new governess. There never was such a nice girl as Miss Osborne, in her opinion—and she was so well educated; she had found out that—and mixed in such high society: oh, she was sure of loving her like a sister! What a contrast to Miss Berncastle!

I was not particularly hasty in forming my opinion, yet that of mine for Miss Osborne was a favourable one at first sight.

Friendless and alone! Who were they in whom she was interested at Cliverton then?—that perplexed me. What mattered it? the circle at 'The Rest' was closed—the last face predestined to have its influence on the fortunes of that gloomy house on the cliffs hanging over the bellowing sea, had come at last, and the life of home and pictures by its red fireside was fading into the life of action—the battle with the world.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE DREAM ENDS.

"I SAY, Luke, what do you keep in that drawer—your money?" asked Edward, on the evening of the following day.

I was fully equipped for a journey to Wharnby House, and had just locked my drawer containing the trinkets and the miniature, to be transferred some day to their rightful owner.

"Yes," I replied.

It was not a falsehood, for there were a few shillings and a solitary sovereign locked within. My purchases had made terrible havoc in my funds, and I was looking forward somewhat anxiously to the next quarterly remittance.

"How much have you saved, Luke?" anxiously inquired my younger brother.

"Saved!" said I—"Saved! Not much."

"Fifty pounds?" interrogatively.

"Fifty pounds!" I cried—"Pooh!—why should I save fifty pounds?"

"I have saved fifty," said Ned, coolly; "I shall save more next year. Father places us all on one footing then, Luke."

"You are worth fifty pounds, then, Ned," said I. "I wish you joy. What are you going to buy with it—a new pony?"

"I am going to bank it, and get interest for it, and put more to it, and keep saving up, and becoming richer every day," he answered.

"What a strange taste in an Elmore!" I observed.

"There ought to be one prudent member of a family," said Edward, very gravely; "now you fling your money about anywhere. Last week there were two sovereigns on this carpet—flung about like rubbish."

"There were no thieves in the house."

"How do you know? How can you an-

swer for all the servants? I can tell you, I mistrust half of them."

"Prudent Ned!"

"There's Agnes spends every shilling on finery, and borrows of Gilbert, who is not much better himself—look at the new books he's always buying!—so, *I* shall save."

"To provide for a rainy day, Ned," I said, "to help your poor brothers and sister, when they are in grievous distress, eh?"

"That's very likely!" replied he, with a laugh,—“No, no, I'm for myself."

"A good motto, and you are not the first wise man that has set up his banner with it," said I, "aye, and has won many a fight, although the victory in the end may have proved a barren one. To change the subject, are you for Wharnby House?"

"Not I," said he; "I see the Silvernotts often enough. I say, Luke," with a sly expression, "it's a nice ride over there of an evening, is it not?"

"Very."

"Some of these days you'll ride to Wharnby House, and never come back again — stop

there for good, and marry Cely Silvernot, eh, Luke?"

What a transparent individual I was!—Here, in less than a minute, had my own brother seen through me—my younger brother—and was twitting me with my secret.

"I think you have talked enough nonsense for this evening," said I, indignantly. "There, my young miser, you go and make money—and be happy!"

"And you go and make love—and be jilted!"

He did not wait for my reply, but left me, with a merry laugh, at his own rejoinder.

'Be jilted!' that was an ugly conclusion to our conversation, and I rather disliked it. I thought of it going down the broad stairs, and tried to laugh it off. Why should I be jilted? It was not known I was in love yet. Edward Elmore was most decidedly an unsympathising brother. He was always selfish, and now he was a money worshipper, and but sixteen—a few months over sixteen years of age. He would never be a hero!

"Out again?" said my father, as I entered.

"Merely to Wharnby House," said I, carelessly.

"You will never be a home-lover, Luke," said he; "you are fond of life."

He sighed audibly.

"Where is Agnes?"

"Practising the piano with Miss Osborne. Do you want her?"

"I thought I would ask her to accompany me."

"Let her stay where she is," said my father; "she goes out often enough,"

Gilbert was in the room, and suddenly broke in with—"I promised to spend an hour with old Mr. Silvernot one evening this week. Shall I be your companion, Luke?"

"Do; I will order the carriage."

The carriage was ordered, and Gilbert was prepared to start.

"You will not come, father?"

"No, Gilbert," shaking his head; "it never pleases me, and invariably fatigues. You will present my compliments."

"We will not fail."

Gilbert, leaning on my arm—not for sup-



port, but in friendship, — limped along the hall.

“I did not ask you, Gilbert, because you so seldom go out—care so little for it.”

“I have not come for my own sake, to-night,” he said.

“For mine?”

“Yes, for yours,” he replied. “You do not like to call at Wharnby House always unaccompanied—it looks particular.”

Another decipherer of my hidden motives—what a shallow deceiver I must be!

We were in the carriage and moving on to our friends:—

“Half-past seven,” said Gilbert, referring to his watch. “It is not late. I hope the rector is there.”

“You are attached to him?”

“I esteem him highly,” said Gilbert; “I believe there is the warmest little heart that ever beat beneath his quaint exterior. He is a learned man, too, and I like his conversation. Now old Mr. Silvernot is the slightest degree prosy.”

“Granted.”

“Still I am a staid fellow myself—I hardly feel a young man, Luke—I am out of place with the young.”

There was a grim look on his pale face that passed away as quickly as it came—a mere shadow of the twilight.

“Here we are, Luke,” said he—“holloa!”

“What is it?”

“What is it!” repeated Gilbert—“nothing—but—but my dear Luke, keep your place—don’t move.”

“Why?” I almost shouted, as I sprang to the window, with the intention of looking out.

“Did I not tell you ‘Nothing,’” said Gilbert; “I think I must have been dozing in the carriage, and talking nonsense. What did I say?”

“‘Keep your place and don’t move,’” I reiterated, looking anxiously towards the house.

“I was decidedly talking nonsense,” said Gilbert; “I imagined the carriage was lurching too much to the left to be safe. Will you get out first and assist me?”

Perfectly bewildered by my brother's incomprehensible explanation, I did so, and we entered the house.

"How d'ye do, my lads—how d'ye do," cried out Mr. Silvernot senior, tumbling off the sofa on which he had been dozing, and forcibly shaking hands with us; "sit ye down. Mrs. Silvernot and Miss Wigginton are upstairs—Arabella's practising a new song somewhere—but they'll be here presently. And how's your father?—I half expected to see him and Mr. Vaudon—and how do *you* both do?"

A few common-place remarks, and then Gilbert said—

"And Miss Celia—she is well, I hope?"

"Well!" cried the old gentleman, polishing his bald head with his handkerchief; "to be sure she is—she went into the garden after dinner with young—what's his name?"

Mr. Silvernot had been so suddenly aroused from his customary nap, that he was a trifle confused at present.

"There is a heavy dew to night," said Gilbert; "I trust Miss Celia will not suffer from its effects."

"God bless me, I hope not!" said the father, alarmed; "they merely strolled up and down the terrace outside, and—Lord deliver us! if I haven't been sleeping with that French window open!"

He ran towards it, and, looking out, cried—

"Come, it's getting late there, and we've visitors, Cely. How very imprudent not to shut the window after you—I might have been as blind as a bat by this time."

"Celia certainly closed it, Mr. Silvernot," said a clear deep voice, that made me start from my seat and listen more attentively; "I can take my oath she closed it carefully as we went out."

I held my breath, and glared at the window, through which two figures were passing into the room—one the lovely figure I knew so well, the other that of a tall young man—so tall that he had to stoop considerably in order to enter and follow Celia.

"What, Mr. Gilbert!—Mr. Luke!" cried Celia, as she shook hands with us—"here is a very old friend of yours, Mr. Luke; you remember Master Paul Redwin?"

"I remember Master Redwin well," I answered, hoarsely. I felt that I was trembling as I held her hand—that my cheeks had lost their colour, and my voice its natural tone—like one who had seen a phantom.

Yet, it was not the appearance of Redwin that alarmed or unmanned me in itself—it was something that seemed to have snapped at my heart, as they came in together from the terrace looking on the garden.

I turned to greet him. There was a slight flush on his face, for a moment, as he extended his hand.

"We have not met for many years, Mr. Elmore," he said; "and we meet now for the third time. The last interview was a well-remembered one for me, I think."

"Somewhat harsh," said I, shaking hands with him. "You came at a bad time for your disinterested errand. For my share in that day, I ask your pardon."

"Your share! Do you think I bear *you* malice, then?"

"I should have said 'No,' when you spoke of coming to 'The Rest,'" said I. "As for

malice, I hope you bear none in your heart, Mr. Redwin. My father was severe, but he is a severe man, and has strange ways with him. I have always resolved to ask his pardon, too, when we should chance to meet."

"Say no more about it, Elmore," said Redwin—"we are talking as if it were but yesterday; and Celia looks on, all wonder, as well she may. And,"—turning to my brother—"I believe I have the honour of addressing Mr. Gilbert Elmore?"

"Such is my name, sir," replied Gilbert, bowing very stiffly.

"You do not remember the occurrence of which your brother speaks?"

"Yes, I do," replied Gilbert—"and have to express my regret for the same, Mr. Redwin."

Gilbert turned immediately to Mr. Silvernot, upon completing his answer, as if to preclude further conversation with my old companion. Redwin crossed to the couch on which Celia had taken a seat, and leant over her, talking earnestly; and I stood in the dark recess of the window, watching them.

It was almost too dark to distinguish the changes that time had made upon Paul Redwin ; but I could see that he was a handsome young man, with a proud, aristocratical look on his face, which was partly softened by two bright dark eyes, sparkling with intelligence and humour—and there was a saucy curl of the upper lip, too, that I remembered in the boy.

There were lights brought in a few minutes after the entrance of Celia and Redwin, and the latter came more prominently into view. It was the same boy on a larger scale. The same air of foppery pervaded him. There was the dress in the height of the prevailing fashion, the same parade of wealth more extensively displayed in an immense emerald on his little finger, and in diamond studs glittering on his breast.

Would he assume the old air of superiority over me when he knew me better ? I doubted its effect a second time.

Still, I might like Paul Redwin. Put aside his artificial manner, and he would be good company—perhaps, a good friend ; but, then

—— he certainly talked a good deal to Celia Silvernot, and Celia listened and smiled, and looked happy.

Mrs. Silvernot and her daughter made their appearance; and Miss Wigginton entering half an hour afterwards, completed the family group. The rector was expected, but he was late. No, I should not like Paul Redwin. He had kept Celia from me all the evening, and I was growing feverish, and my hoarseness had returned, and I could not listen to anything, or respond to anything, but in an abstracted manner; and ah! the heartache that was growing worse each instant, and making agony of every word they said unto each other.

How my temples throbbed—how I wanted to be home in my own room, at ‘The Rest,’ and yet, how I wished I could live at Wharnby House, and watch for ever as I sat watching at that moment!

I had a dreamy consciousness of Mrs. Silvernot making tea, and my dropping my cup and saucer with a crash on a pet spaniel, and apologising to Gilbert, as if he were mas-



ter of the house, and had a material interest in the carpet ; and then the rector was amongst us as if by magic, and shaking hands ; and there they still sat on that couch, and he was still looking into her eyes so confidently, so boldly, as I had never dared in all the long, long time measured by my love, to look.

I knew, too, that I was watched in my turn—that Miss Silvernot had expressed an opinion that ‘I was dull,’ and I had answered, ‘not at all, if you please, ma’am,’ in an incoherent manner—and that the little rector looked with more than common interest at me, and fidgetted on his chair, and coughed, and came across to speak.

“Well, Luke, I half expected to see your father here to-night.”

“Did you, Mr. Silvernot?”

“You have a cold?”

“No—that is—yes—I hardly know.”

“You perceive we have a very old friend here to-night?” said the rector.

This was a home-thrust, and I winced perceptibly.

“Yes—Mr. Redwin.”

“Do you think he has altered?”

“A little.”

Half ashamed of my laconic reply, I said—

“Has Mr. Redwin returned many days, sir?”

“Only three or four. I expect he will be here very often.”

“What’s that for?”

“Dear me,” said the rector, jumping at my impetuous query. “Why, he will not return to Paris, and is a near neighbour—that’s all.”

“Oh! of course—of course.”

I began to answer in monosyllables, and became more abstracted each instant, so the clergyman passed to Gilbert’s side. I joined the party at the table, and sat beside Mrs. Silvernot, who not caring much for a talker, and hardly observer enough to detect a bad listener, was a capital shelter for that strange manner, which, try how I would, I could not shake off or conceal.

There were some scrap-books on the table, and Redwin opened one carelessly, and listlessly glanced at the plates. Celia pointed

out some particular beauty, and he was immediately deeply interested. He had made great progress in those three days he had been at Wharnby, and his manner, which was fascinating enough, and his attentions (how marked, how very marked to me!) had done their work on Celia's heart, and I was lost!

I saw it in her bright eyes—in her happiness at being near him, so ill concealed, so girlishly apparent, so devoid of that disguise which a few months would bring to her—a part of woman's nature!

I knew at once that all my hopes were shattered at my feet—that the first affections of her heart—those affections made up of the best and purest feelings—would be his, if he sought them, as surely as I felt convinced he was striving steadily to win her; I knew my castle, that gloriously constructed edifice of vain imagination, had all vanished now was heaped ruin on ruin, and, Marius-like, I stood a solitary mourner. I saw the one I had loved so long, won from me by a few careless words, an old flippant manner, that had not so true a light within it as the bril-

liants sparkling disdainfully across the table at me.

I felt very thankful when the conversation took a general turn and we were all engaged in it, and they could not talk so much in an under tone, and have a topic entirely to themselves—I laughed with Redwin, a melodramatic kind of laugh it was though—and hazarded a few words to Celia in my old friendly manner, with indifferent success. The evening was long and tedious, all was to me unprofitable and pulseless—my interest in Celia was gone, she had never looked at me beyond a friend, and I had looked too far, and suffered for it.

We were in the carriage again, Gilbert and I, and rattling homewards. Shrunk back, in the thick cushions I lay, silent and miserable.

I felt Gilbert's hand upon my shoulder.

"Cheer up, Luke," said he, assuringly; "you are not downcast because a rival springs to light."

He had never sought my confidence, never shown till this evening that he had known my secret, and kept it to himself—but in my

bitter grief and loneliness, he came with his cheering words and open heart.

I could not help it—I wrestled with it long, and bit my lips till the blood streamed from them, to restrain it, but all was nugatory and unavailing. It was the action of a disappointed child—it showed how little of a man I was at heart, and what a boy in my experience and strength—I covered my face with my hot hands, and struggled with my tears, and sought to stop them streaming down my face.

“One moment, Gilbert—I will be a man in one moment. How foolish!—is it not?”

He looked out of the window, and returned no answer.

A long pause.

“Now, Gilbert, what is it?”

“I did not think it had gone so far as this, dear Luke,” said he, mournfully. “I know not what to say.”

“It is useless saying anything, my brother; it is past.”

“Did she hold out to you any hope—any encouragement?” he asked, sternly; “or have you been led on by your own illusions?”

"By mine own," I answered, in a hollow voice; "I have but been encouraged by my own foolish chimeras—I have no fault to find but with myself."

"That's well. Do you think they are engaged?"

"Not yet—they will be."

"You have given up all hope?"

"All."

"Well, you are not nineteen years of age yet, Luke," said he; "that is not the time for a broken heart."

"No, it is not, Gilbert."

"You will not let those at Wharnby House see your disappointment?"

"If they have not seen it already—no."

"It was a first love—a boy's love—that was all."

"It was my life—my ambition—my sole study!" I cried, passionately. "I had no other thought—no other care. Don't speak again. Let me think."

We were silent till we reached 'The Rest.'

"Gilbert."

"Yes, Luke."

"What did you see from the carriage-window, as we approached the Silvernots?"

"Why ask? The story is finished—let us not turn backward to pore over leaves long since read," said Gilbert.

"I ask it as a favour."

"I saw them on the terrace—he was talking earnestly to her, with his arm lightly thrown round her waist."

"And she—listened?"

"She listened."

"He was telling his love then!" said I, with a half groan.

"Luke," said he, as he walked by my side, supported by his crutch, along the hall, "I have not offered to condole with you—I know it would be a foolish and a vain endeavour. You have deeper feelings than most young men—you are a true Elmore; so I will not affect to make light of all that has passed this evening. I wish we had never known the Silvernots, as it has ended thus. You will try to forget?"

"I will," said I; "and, Gilbert, let me thank you for that forbearance. When con-

dolence is of no avail, it is cruelty to use it. Ah ! Gilbert, Gilbert, what should I be without you !”

“ You will come in ?”

I stood with my foot upon the stairs.

“ Not to-night. Say I am unwell—that my head aches—as it does, fearfully—say anything. Good night, Gilbert.”

“ Good night !”

When alone in my old room, I lit the fire, already laid to my hand, although it was summer and a sultry night, and sat before it, glaring with blood-shot eyes into its depths, as if my life were written in it.

When it was late, and all was silence at ‘The Rest,’ I opened the drawer consecrated to one lost to me, and drew the trinkets and my miniature forth, and dropped them silently into the fire. They shrivelled, cracked, and flew beneath the heat—then mingled in a mass, grew red, and were gone ! My love dreams had faded ;—why should they, part of them, exist to mock me with their fallacy ?

I shed no tears over them—of the hap-



piness they might have brought me in seeing her happy at my lover's gifts. I thought of the past, and suffered from many a keen pang, but there was a new-born sternness in my breast, and it was hardening me to iron.

I looked through my window—it was very dark and starless, and occasionally the lightning played in the distance, and shed a momentary radiance over the scenery of home. The dark sky overhead was but the type of the first clouds that had thrown their shadow on me, and the lightning fit emblem of that influence, which had blasted the green young plant, that might have grown unto a tree, and sheltered me from evil beneath its friendly boughs, in lieu of withering with a breath, and dying in unfriendly soil.

## CHAPTER VII.

## NEWS FROM PARIS.

WITH the death-blow to my hopes of ever calling Celia Silvernot my wife, there died not out the love I had for her. It was existent still;—it burned the fiercer, confined in its narrow bounds, and with so small a vent. Wharnby House saw me as often as heretofore, and I sought the flame of jealousy, that scorched me as I fluttered round it.

I hid my feelings more completely—I obtained that command over my inner self that I had once striven for in vain, and could smile like truth when stung by the lover's tenderness to Celia. He had not proposed—he had made no statement to the parents of

the beautiful girl yet—he was probably awaiting his twenty-first birthday, when he should be, as he used to boast of in his younger days, a rich man.

Mrs. Silvernot was in no hurry—she was sure of him, and it was a good match ; and, although she had had her intentions concerning a Luke Elmore, yet here was a bird that probably carried more gold on its wings, for Paul Redwin was an only son. Still I was welcome at Wharnby House ; I was a bit of a favourite, and Celia had always liked me—never loved me.

Vaudon—keen, watchful Vaudon—taking in everything with his black, rolling eyes, detected my position in less than five minutes after a chance call at Wharnby House.

The next morning he took an opportunity of being alone with me, and began—

“So you rejected my advice, and the new gallant has arrived—not the least attractive of gallants either—and Luke Elmore resigns, checkmated, with not a piece brought out upon the board.”

“Did I ever own to being engaged in the battle?”

"Yes," he replied, "with your eyes ; your true lover's manner—your fits of thought ; your constant rides to the right of 'The Rest' at all hours of the day."

"I do not appear particularly affected, do I?" was my second question.

"The lake in the garden looks not particularly deep, does it?" he inquired ; "yet it is—one could drown very comfortably therein."

"You may be mistaken for once, Vaudon."

"Not I," said Vaudon. "I am never wrong ; but then I am a conceited man in my opinions, Luke. Shall I tell you now those reasons for never marrying, which I spoke of when riding home from the Silvernots, one moonlight night?"

I looked up suddenly. He was standing before me with a strange, unearthly expression, with a mocking smile, and deeply contracted brow. His arms were crossed upon his broad chest, one hand in that old habit of toying with his beard : he looked down upon me as the tempter of all men might look down upon the tempted ; and I shuddered as if the

Presence of Evil were in the room, and circling over me, and threatening.

"You may tell me, if you like," said I, lowering my gaze.

"Because," in a low, suppressed tone, as if he were speaking with his teeth close-set, "there is no woman worth the marrying; they are all false and black at heart—they inherit sin from Eve. It is the truest religion of all holy faiths that excludes them from the highest heaven."

I felt the blood rushing to my face at this damning doctrine of my father's friend; but I could but sit and listen, conscious that he stood glaring down upon me.

"You colour up," he said; "that shows the superiority of your nature. Women never blush but for a purpose."

"Cease! cease! I have a sister."

"Some pass for good, we know," he continued savagely. "Some die, and have good Christians written on their grave-stones; but believe me, Luke, there is no woman that cannot be tempted from her duty."

"Why do you tell all this to me?" I asked abruptly.

“Because you are easily impressed, and one more artful than Celia may yet ensnare you, Luke,” he answered; “because I would teach you that marriage is a hideous mockery, an iron chain to men, and more especially to one like you—a quick observer with a sensitive heart. Women are men’s prey, not men’s equals.”

“I will hear no more,” I cried, starting to my feet. “It is Satan’s own hellish promptings!”

He caught my arm, and stopped me.

“You will acknowledge I am right, some day,” said he; “it may be a dangerous precept to teach, but you are aloof from the world, and have a mind tolerably well balanced. Seek pleasure where you will, the days of man soon sink into an endless night.”

“Vaudon, do you believe in God?”

“Another time — another time,” said he, evasively; “my belief in many things, you see, is strange; my whole being is a mystery, and I dare not even attempt the solution to myself. I force my counsel on no man. I have, for the first time, told you a strange

truth—it will be years before you have courage to believe.”

“Teach no one in this house that accursed precept, Vaudon; let the moral contagion spread no further. I feel, try how I will, that I have drunk in poison.”

“I will say no more,” said he—“I have but told you in what I put faith, myself. I am a man who has seen more of the world than most men, and have judged it as it deserved—with its false pretensions, and its hollow professions, and its varnished surfaces, turned so that society may admire and worship. The world has been my study, and I am a master of the sciences it taught me.”

“You will keep them to yourself,” said I; “it is not fear for myself, but—for others.”

“Do I ever expound my doctrines?”

“I have never heard you before.”

“Trust me, then.”

I left him.

What horrid reasoning had I heard—what a fearful promulgation of his evil theories! What man could this be, to seek to lower and debase a youthful mind (so easy to be marked

and blackened at the best), and point the way out to him—that broad path from which there is no turning back?

What reason had he in telling me, that woman was a living lie—that there was no truth or candour in her—and that my study should be her degradation; asserting that I should not be equally degraded, though I lowered her, and cast the brand with my own guilty hands? What project could he conceal? Then, there was the strange look, that seemed akin to hate, which I had noticed bent upon me—what did it forebode?

And then came the torturing inquiry, had he confined his words to me alone, or was he seeking to bring us all to his own standard—to poison the minds of Gilbert, Edward, even Agnes, and my own father? My impulse was to confront him with each of them, but of what could I accuse Vaudon? What had he said to me, in fact, but that which many men, soured by disappointment, believe—that which I knew my own father gave implicit credence to—the want of faith in woman's purity—the disbelief in woman's love!



During the last few days I had also detected a marked and distant manner of Gilbert's towards Vaudon, and I had no doubt that some dialogue, like that which I have related, had passed between them, and Gilbert had resented his advice, and foiled it ; but my brother made no mention of the same to me, and Vaudon was more of a friend to our father than ever.

There were many things I could not fathom at 'The Rest.' They seemed to have sprung into being lately, and wore all the air of mystery and confusion.

I had entered the study in an abrupt manner one morning, and found my father alone with Gilbert, who was expostulating, and whose whole manner was excited, and at variance with his habitual calmness.

"Be assured, my dear Gilbert, you are mistaken," said my father ; "think no more of it—let it pass."

Gilbert was about to reply, when my entrance checked him.

"I beg pardon !" I exclaimed ; "I merely require a book that I have mislaid—I—"

"Don't go, Luke," said my father, evi-

dently glad of a pretext to avoid a prolonged *tete-à-tete* with his son. "We are not talking treason. How are the Silvernotts?—have you seen them lately? And the rector, is he well?"

Gilbert, perceiving the object of his father's anxious queries, lingered a few moments, and then left the room.

There was another deepening calamity that gave much concern to Gilbert and me, and of which we silently took notice, but spared ourselves the pain of commenting upon to each other.

It came upon my father like a sudden affliction—it seemed making the same insidious, but fatal track as of a ravaging disease—it showed itself at intervals of weeks, then days, and threatened to settle, and become inevitable. It told its secret in the flushed face of my father—it spoke aloud from between his parched lips—it was seen in the shaking hands and faltering, unsteady footfall—it pointed out the *drunkard* to the sneering menials of home.

Amongst all the phases of drink—and it

has as many as there are phases of society—I know of none so full of horror, of so fearful a humiliation, as the man of genius or of education giving way to that strange curse; flinging away his talents, prostrating a great mind, lowering all self-respect, casting aside all thought of home, and children's love, and men's esteem, and passing straightway to something lower than the brutes.

The knowledge of this sudden calamity came upon me with a fearful blow—I could not believe the testimony of my own sight; I could not imagine that he, of all men—so proud, so stern, so rigid an anchorite in his lonely hermitage—could descend to the burning consolation of the wine-cup.

It was known throughout the house immediately. It was my own father—my own dear father—who, stern and unyielding as he seemed, loved us all so much, so very dearly—as spars from the great wreck of that past life to which he clung, and of which they were a part—who went reeling to his room, with vacant looks and glassy eyes, or was supported along the passages by that mysterious

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man who was ever with him, and who seemed his fate.

There was one disgrace kept from us. The Silvernots knew not of the awful change; when they called, it was invariably in the early morning, when, though pale and haggard from the solitary debauch of the preceding night, my father was sober, and as they had ever known him.

If he made one of his chance visits to Wharnby House, he still preserved his old character in their eyes, but it was at home that he was changed and another man.

It was nigh unto the celebrated Cliverton ball; that ball which I had still a firm resolve to attend, and remind Celia of her promise, and show, if the Silvernot family had suspicions of my disappointment, and my bankruptcy at heart, what a gay young fellow I was, without a care in the wide world! Celia had forgotten our conversation concerning the ball, and the idea of Luke Elmore from the gloomy 'Rest,' mingling in a scene of so much pleasure and excitement, had never suggested itself to any other imagination.

The summer was nearly gone—some dry, yellow leaves, few as yet, were flitting to and fro, along the garden paths and chalky roads, indicative of coming Autumn—I was sitting under a favourite tree in the Park, watching the deer in the distance, when Gilbert, who had noiselessly advanced, stood before me.

“Always in thought, Luke.”

“You seem to guess my thoughtful moments, Gilbert, and kindly come to dissipate them.”

“I wish I could come upon you, now and then, and see more of the old looks, and less of that brooding face.”

“Time, time,” said I, half smiling, “give me a little grace—you know the wound of love takes long in healing.”

“Sometimes ;” said Gilbert, “has not Vaudon given you better counsel?”

I started.

“I thought so,” said Gilbert, almost fiercely, “this man requites my father’s hospitality well ! This Vaudon is in everything—he has a hand hovering from one unto another, apparently each one’s friend, yet giving lessons that

the bitterest enemy could only wish to inculcate. He tells them not as with a purpose, but by some devil's scheming they appear in common conversation, and wound our ears, and stab our hearts with venomous words. What has he told you?"

"He spoke of my——my disappointment."

"Well?"

"And congratulated me in his cold, sneering way, as from an escape—he pointed out to me an old picture enough,—how easy it is to sin, how great a task to think of marriage,—how the part of a fool to hold the last in reverence, or think that it commands respect."

"'Tis like him," mused Gilbert, with a heavy frown, "like my father, I believe he has at one time met with some fearful blow from woman's hands, and it has shattered every confidence. Still he could keep his busy tongue more quiet."

"What has he said to you?"

"Nothing that I could bring in evidence, or even explain," said Gilbert, "but full of dreadful doubts and evil promptings, that make one almost doubt himself. Good God!

how strange it is that such a man as Vaudon, should be my father's best friend!"

"He has great influence."

"Terrible," cried Gilbert, "what does he seek or want, or is there any motive in all this? With you or me, Luke, his suggestions will never have great weight—he has mistaken us. But——"

"But what?" cried I, alarmed at his pause.

"But with Edward—with Agnes—with our father."

"Have you any proof that" —— I began.

He interrupted me.

"Not any," he said; "but they change, they grow more worldly. Edward becomes cunning, almost low-minded, greedy of gain, fond of money for its own intrinsic value. Agnes seems to have ever a secret purpose—she never boldly seeks her object, though it be a small one, but undermines, and reaches her end at last, by foreign means. And father, (in a faltering voice), how has he altered!"

"But why attribute all this to Vaudon's influence?"

"There is the mystery," said Gilbert. "I cannot do so, and yet I feel convinced that his power rules them. All three are more attached to him than you or I—they have more confidence, and are more with him. I do not say he has taught Edward to grow miserly, or Agnes to be designing, openly; but I do not think him the man to discourage the growth of any evil weed in us, even if he had the power to uproot it by a word."

"You have said something like this to father," said I, remembering the conference I had interrupted in the study,

"I have—and you know the result."

"Too well," I said; "and yet we may be doing Vaudon more than common injustice. He is an eccentric man, full of wild ideas, I confess; but we know no more."

"Not at present," said Gilbert; "but we will watch."

"You spoke of that dreadful change in our father's habits," I said, "can we do nothing—we, his eldest sons—to stop the ravages drink must surely make upon his health?"

Gilbert looked full at me.



"Have you the courage?"

"Try me."

"Do you know our father is in the Park?" said Gilbert, eagerly, "and Vaudon is not with him?"

"What would you do?"

"He is very dull this morning, and I think there is a shadow of remorse on his pale face," said Gilbert. "Let us go to him, and urge him to consider the grief and misery he is breeding for himself and us. We are his sons, and it is our duty."

It was so sudden a proposal—so contrary to all we had ever done—that I hesitated.

"I will go myself," said he, "setting his crutch firmly, "if you fear to tell him the truth, I will go myself. I came into the Park to do it, but I thought the united persuasion of his sons would have more power to make him think."

"The hesitation was but momentary," I, cried springing up "I am ready."

We struck into a less frequented part of the Park, where the grass was long, and the great furze and brambles grew thicker at every tread.

"He went this way," said Gilbert.

"Hush! I cried—"there he is."

At a few yards from us to the right, stood the tall figure of my father. He was standing with his back towards us, intently interested in something he held tightly clenched within his hands. His whole appearance was that of a man contending with some powerful emotion. As we advanced, a newspaper that he had held folded in his hands, fell from them to the ground, and he flung his arms above his head with a cry of anguish that blanched our cheeks, and made us halt.

"Father!" cried Gilbert.

He wheeled round and confronted us.

"What do you here," he cried, in a rapid tone; "what have you been dogging my footsteps hither for? Go to the house—go to the house and leave me—I am not well—I am sick and ill. Where's Vaudon? Where's Vaudon?"

He caught sight of the newspaper at his feet and snatched it from the grass, burying it deep in his breast pocket.

"What do you here?" he asked again.

"We have followed you, dear father," said Gilbert, in a clear distinct voice; "to reason with you, to beg you to strive against that all besetting sin that has come upon you like an affliction from God and poisoned every hope."

"A curse of God, you mean," he muttered.

"We are your children, your loved children," urged Gilbert; "and we can see, none more sure or quick—the awful doom it will bring on you, the early grave it will prepare. If any great affliction, if any irreparable misfortune have fallen on you, bear it with the old heroic courage that has sustained many other sorrows, and share the evil with your sons who have a right to lighten it, and aid you. We pray it on our knees, for the sake of home and love, and Him whose will it was that it should fall upon you."

Gilbert bowed his form before his father in earnest supplication, and involuntarily I knelt beside him.

My father covered his eyes, and his whole frame shook violently.

"Rise, rise," he cried ; "do not kneel to me like that. Oh ! this is more than I can bear !"

"You will promise ?" we urged.

"If you remain like accusing spirits, kneeling there," he cried ; "I will leave you—I will go hence — I will fly from home, from all."

His manner was so wild and agitated and withal so imploring, that we rose. Gilbert laid his hand gently on his arm and drawing away his hand, said :—

"But you will promise, father ?"

"Promise what ?"

Gilbert was about to reply, when he said :—

"No matter, I can guess. Gilbert, there are but two things to choose between—drunkenness, or madness. If I abstain from the former, my shame will drive me to the latter."

"You have borne that shame without so grievous a calamity happening to you," I ventured to assert.

"No, Luke, not this new shame, this

accursed blot that makes us known to all the world."

He tore the newspaper from his pocket. It was a French one, and published in Paris.

"Look here," striking the paper with his hand violently; "here is her name again, that accursed name which I gave her, your own unworthy mother at the altar. That mother who should have loved you and died for you if needful, but who flung away all maternal ties that bound her to her children, and fled from us and brought disgrace upon us. There is that name again, the cause of a duel between a French noble and an English banker—both fighting for the false smiles of the vile courtesan. The duel and its origin are the talk of Paris, the topic at the London clubs, the revival of that old truth in London newspapers which drove me mad, when you were children. 'The wife of Mr. Elmore, that unfortunate gentleman whose deep attachment to her was so remarkable,' and a thousand repetitions of mock sympathy. They will all know it — even Wharnby will associate the

name with me—I am branded, degraded, dishonoured even here !”

“ You take too prejudicial a view of what your friends will say ;—you do not do them justice, father,” said my brother.

“ I know them well enough—too well,” he muttered.

“ And supposing that we were the common talk and jest of people in the streets,” said Gilbert ; “ have we not the courage to look back their unworthy scorn, and value it at its just worth ?”

“ And should we lose a father as well as a mother ?—and will the sire have no more love and consideration for his children than she who left them motherless ?” I added.

He looked at us long and steadily—then, suddenly advancing, extended a hand to each of us.

“ I will not promise, boys,” he said, “ but I will try—I cannot do more than try, can I ?”

My father returned to his old self for several days, and he was more affectionate and less irritable towards his children than he

had been since Vaudon darkened the threshold of 'The Rest.'

Then disgrace—the disgrace to his name, which he had dreaded reaching him in that lonely spot upon the English coast, came even to Wharnby, and the county paper heralded the news, and published its translation from the French in large type, and added fresh intelligence of the death of Count De L. —, and heaped more coals of fire upon my father's head. Then rumour grew round Wharnby, and the name was associated with the owner of 'The Rest,' and dates were examined, and found to tally with each other—the date of Mrs. Elmore's flight, and that of the purchase of 'The Rest'—and we were known and pitied!

Oh! that mock pity!—that lying affectation of interest in our misery which is so hard to bear! That born of vulgar curiosity is so difficult to struggle against, so vain to satisfy!

The Silvernotts, with more care for our feelings, refrained from any recurrence to the subject, and my father was grateful for it in his heart, and inwardly thanked the con-

siderate rector, whom he knew to be the cause, for his kind silence and charitable reserve. But the effort at trial had passed, and he had given way. The same unsteady step, the blood-shot eyes, the wild flushed looks came again, night after night, and with it grew (strangely enough) that indomitable pride, that arrogance of wealth and learning, which had always been his characteristic, and which now became fiercer every day, as if, by his haughty bearing, he sought to keep down, with a giant's strength, the knowledge to others of that moral abasement into which he had degenerated.

END OF VOL. I.



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